

# Session Five: Telling Our Gospel Story

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[0:00] Hey, welcome back to Gospel Growth. This is our Life on Life discipleship course, and we're in module four.

We're looking at going with the gospel. We're talking about things like mission and what is it that we're supposed to do as Christians. So far, we've seen every Christian's a missionary. So far, we've seen that the mission of God is local, it's global, it's neighbors, it's nations.

We've seen that we need the power of the Spirit. And we've looked at how do we do mission in everyday life. The next thing we wanna consider here is, what are we supposed to be showing and telling people when we're on mission?

What is it about Jesus that we're meant to be showing and telling? Just a big kind of picture piece here just to start us off is, good missionaries, what we're doing is we're showing how Jesus is better than idols.

We're showing how Jesus is better than, an idol in the Bible is something that we worship that's not God, right? So it's how is Jesus better than all the other things around us that we're worshipping, right?

[1:08] We're meant to point out that, that, you know, this is what an idol is. And then we're meant to show how that idol, you know, isn't God, how it exposed it as worthless. But then we've gotta go on and show how Jesus is better.

In our community, in our culture, you know, one possible idol could be having a boat. It doesn't mean if you have a boat, you have an idol. But a lot of folks would say, hey, if I had a boat, you know, our marriage would be better, for example.

And so they've now, they've now only, I mean, we would know from the Bible that it's God who, when we grow closer to him, we grow closer to each other. And all those, God helps our marriages, he heals them. But we could say a boat would do that.

And then, you know, we get a boat. And then, you know, the people who think that if you got a boat, your marriage would be better are clearly people who've never tried to anchor a boat with their spouse, right?

Does not make your marriage better. But that's the thing. It's like this thing, if we had this thing, oh man, our life would be so much better. It could be a job, it could be a relationship, it could be a certain amount of money, it could be a home, it could be whatever the case is, if we just had that.

[2:12] So we're meant to point those things out, we're meant to expose them as worthless. But a lot of us stop there. In fact, there was a whole era of Christianity in America where that's what we did. We said, that's bad, that's terrible.

But we didn't go on to show how Jesus is better. And so missionaries do that. We go on to show that Jesus is better. And I would encourage you, as you're doing this, as you're having conversations like this with people, to do it with a sense of empathy.

Here's why. C.S. Lewis says that idols always break the hearts of their worshipers. And what we're dealing with, just take that boat example. If a couple really did say, that's going to fix their marriage, and then they said they got into debt to get this boat, and then they realized years later, their marriage is still falling apart, it's still a mess.

There's a brokenheartedness that comes when we realize, man, we ran after something that looked like an oasis, and it turned out to be a mirage. And I think that sometimes as Christians, we can be cruel, but we should be empathetic.

We should be compassionate, because this is a hard thing for a lot of people to recognize. I mean, I threw myself into that relationship. I threw myself into that career. I threw myself into that, and it turned out to just be a mirage.

[ 3 : 24 ] It wasn't an oasis at all. And so we want to show that Jesus is better, but we want to do it with compassion, with empathy. But how do we do this? How do we show Jesus is better? Well, let me try to give you a few tips.

The first thing, or the best way, I think, is to do it by telling the story of what God's done for you. I think one of the most powerful things that you and I can do is tell our own gospel story, right? Tell our story. I love this verse in 1 Peter 3.15. In your hearts, honor Christ as Lord and holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that's within you, yet do it with gentleness and respect.

Now, we'll circle back to this verse in a minute because I think this is a helpful verse for lots of reasons. But I want to say, I don't think being prepared, always being prepared to give an answer, is necessarily about having all the right answers.

It's not just about having all the right answers. I think it's also about being prepared to share the story of what Jesus has done for you, what Jesus has done for me, right?

[ 4 : 30 ] How Jesus has rescued us. We're not just meant to share facts about God. We're meant to tell the story of what Jesus has done for us. That's what we see in Mark 5.

There's this man who's just ravaged by demons. You can go back and read it. It's a phenomenal story. And at the end, Jesus tells this man, he says, go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, how he had mercy on you.

Go do that. Go tell your friends. Go home and tell your people what I did for you. In John 4, we see this woman who Jesus meets at the well. She goes and tells everybody. And listen to what it says in verse 39.

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him and Jesus. Why? Because of the woman's testimony. And we go on to read that they asked Jesus to stay and he stays and many more believe.

And they end up saying, look, it all started because we heard your story. We heard your story of what Jesus did for you. But now we, it says, they said, we know, we've seen for ourselves, we've heard for ourselves.

[ 5 : 31 ] We know he is indeed the savior of the world. Man, that is beautiful, right? That comes from us telling our stories. Well, as we think about telling our story of what Jesus has done, you know, where do we typically go wrong?

I mean, a lot of us have maybe tried this, not gotten the results we hoped for, or we just never tried it at all. We thought people would just see our lives and that should be enough for them. That's not what Jesus wants. So let's look at, you know, areas where we, you know, where we struggle with this.

And I want to start by saying, I'm not the expert at this. In fact, you know, you might even think, well, if you're, if I was a pastor, this would be really easy. I think, I think it's the contrary. I find myself always very awkward.

I mean, I'm regretting, you know, like the moment that's going to happen where they, I'm scared of this moment where they're going to say, what is it you do? Because I know as soon as I say, I'm a pastor, it's going to get awkward. It's going to get weird.

They're going to apologize for cussing so much, you know, and all the jokes they just told. So I think it's harder for me, but let's just admit that it's hard, period. And if you're watching this and you're like the Billy Graham of wherever, bear with us.

[ 6 : 34 ] A lot of us, this is tough for us, right? And so let me just kind of, just hit really quickly where a lot of us go wrong. A lot of us don't think our story is that great. And that's just because we have sensationalized certain types of testimonies.

And so if we, you know, if we weren't like, you know, some kind of like, you know, Fidel Castro or Hitler or, you know, Maryland, you know, or Charles Manson or something, if we weren't like that, when Jesus saved us, we don't think our story is that good.

And that leads to a lot of people who aren't maybe addicts or aren't, you know, whatever the case may be, they don't think that they need Jesus because they've never heard stories of people like them who admitted they needed Jesus, right?

So that's the first one. We just don't think our story is that great. Some of us though, we think our story is a little too crazy and we don't want to share it because we're worried we'll scare children.

We're worried we'll lose our job. We're worried that, you know, no one would want to associate with us anymore. That's one real concern. I think some of us, however, we tell other people's stories.

[ 7 : 39 ] You know, it's like we're collecting, you know, stories and we're just looking for opportunities to tell about what God's done in other people's lives. And that's helpful. It's good to say, I know a person who God did this with them, but man, that cannot be the only story we tell.

It's just someone else's stories. Some of us just tell facts and data. You know, we've got a lot of scriptures memorized. We've figured out the points. You know, we've aligned it all, but man, it's not personal.

It's just data. It's just information that we're sharing. That gets back to that first Corinthians, sorry, that first Peter three passage. You know, always be prepared to give a defense. I mean, we've got folks who, you know, who come to events, you know, corporate public events, and they shout and scream Bible verses, but man, there's no connection to like, here's how I needed Jesus.

Here's what Jesus has done for me. And then there's also no gentleness and respect, which is the other thing that verse tells us we shouldn't forget, right? So we don't want to just tell facts and data. And then another way that we get it wrong is some of us just tell the wrong story.

We tell a story that leads people to think that we basically saved ourselves. We had this epiphany. You know, we knew we needed help. We went and got help.

[ 8 : 51 ] We, you know, we pulled ourselves up by our own bootstraps. And we tell this gospel story that where the good news seems to be that, you know, we just, you know, came to our senses and did something about it instead of God saved us.

And that's the wrong story. And that story always results in pride or despair. People going, oh man, I could never do that. They just fallow in despair because I could never be like that person and pull myself up by my bootstraps, you know?

So we want to reject that kind of story. And then I think the last way we get this wrong is some of us just don't say anything at all. You know, we think that this is a very private decision.

It's a very personal decision. And that means we shouldn't talk about it at all. And I'm going to push back on that some too because I think we must talk about it. So let me just really quickly give you the key elements to telling the right story.

What are the key elements to telling the story the right way? What's the right story? The first thing I'd say is we want to be boasting in our weaknesses but not in our sin. Here's what I mean.

Sometimes folks go to share their testimony and what we get is long, drawn out, borderline nostalgic stories about all the sin they used to did.

[ 10 : 05 ] And it ends up making you think they wish that that was still happening, right? We want to avoid that kind of stuff. But we do want to boast in our weakness because that shows Jesus as strong, right?

First story, 2 Corinthians 12, 9 tells us this. Paul says, God says, This is a powerful thing.

In our story, we want to say, man, this is the type of person I was. I was weak and God has come and by his strength, he has saved me, right? So you want to boast in your weakness but you don't want to spend a lot of time boasting in your sin.

The second thing I would say is you want to make it clear in telling your story that Jesus is the hero, not you, okay? We already kind of alluded to this as sort of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps thing.

We don't want that. We don't want this picture that me and Jesus did it together hand in hand and we both get credit because in the Bible, it says that no one is going to boast, right?

[ 11 : 09 ] None of us are going to be able to boast because it's by God's mercy that he saved us, right? We don't want to tell the story that makes it sound like God was uninvolved in our life until we prayed some prayer and now he jumped in.

No, we want to say, man, he was, I look over my shoulder, he was always involved. He was always pursuing me and just at the right moment, he saved me, right? And we don't want to, also we don't want to make Jesus sound like he's this bad cop who made us quit all the fun stuff.

No, we were slaves and he set us free. He emancipated us. He delivered us. He liberated us, right? What does John 8 say? If the son has set you free, you will be free indeed, right?

And sometimes when we tell our gospel stories, we make it sound like we became Christians because it was the right thing to do, but then Jesus shut down all of our fun, right? So you want to avoid that too. Make it clear that Jesus is the hero.

Like that Mark 5 story where that man with all the demons gets saved by Jesus. Jesus said, go tell them that you met the Lord and he had mercy on you. That word mercy means pity.

[ 12 : 13 ] And so when we're telling our stories, it's like, man, I was pitiful and he had pity on me. The Lord had mercy on me, right? A couple more quick ones to telling the right story. Make sure you tell how the story is current and ongoing.

I see this a lot. People sharing the story of what Jesus has done for them. And it's like 1974, Jesus showed up, did a bunch of cool stuff and that's it. You know, he just fixed everything and they haven't needed him since.

And they don't mean that, but that's how it feels when you hear the story. So I think one of the most powerful things we can do is say, here's what Jesus did and here's what Jesus is doing. I didn't just need Jesus then, I need Jesus now, right?

So we want to talk about not just what he's done, but what he is doing now. How right now we, I needed a savior and I need a savior. I need him, right? He is ongoingly saving me and transforming me.

And the last little tip I'll give you is knowing that our gospel stories are meant to go viral. This moment, Jesus saving us, this work of Jesus, it's not meant to be treated like a trip to an embarrassing clinic where you go out of town, you use a false name, you wear a disguise and you hope to God nobody ever finds out.

[ 13 : 28 ] It is personal what God does for us when he saves us. He knows us, he calls us by name. He's like that woman at the well. You've had five husbands and the man you're with is not your husband.

That's a personal thing, but it's meant to go public. Because it's personal doesn't mean it's meant to be private, okay? And so I think one of the best things we can do is to just embrace the fact that our story is meant to be told.

It's meant to go viral. It's meant to be told to as many people as possible because it brings God glory. And that's the last thing I'll say is that when we're all telling our stories together, it shows God's power to save anyone.

That's a really beautiful thing about being part of a church, being part of a community is when we're all telling our stories of, look, the Lord had mercy on me, the Lord had mercy on me, the Lord had mercy on me. When we do that and we don't just tell the crazy ones, when we do this, what we do is we show the watching world that there's people who, those people needed to be saved and then there's people who, well, they kind of look like they had it all together and both of those people needed Jesus.

Rule breakers, rebels, rule keepers, robots. They both needed Jesus. And this is what we're meant to do. We're meant to put on display God's power to save everyone.

[ 14 : 39 ] People who thought they needed saving and the people who didn't think they needed saving. Man, God can save. God, we put this thing on display and it's a powerful thing because there's rule breakers and there's rule keepers all around us who need to hear the story of what Jesus has done for us.

I'd love it if you get in your groups and first thing I'd encourage you to do is tell your story. Tell your story of what Jesus has done for you, how he saved you. Talk about how he's ongoingly saving you right now, the past and the present.

Then rejoice together in Jesus. Don't rejoice in stupid sin memories. Rejoice in Jesus. Man, look at Jesus's ability to save us and then pray together for opportunities to share your gospel story.

Love you guys. Think of what Jesus has done for you.