

Session One: What is the Gospel?

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[0 : 00] Hey guys, welcome to Gospel Growth.

This is One Harbor's Life on Life discipleship course. And really the hope behind this course, the goal is that you would grow as a better disciple of Jesus. We're gonna talk about a lot of stuff, but primarily what you're gonna hear us talk about is the gospel.

You've probably heard this before at One Harbor. We quote 1 Corinthians 9 all the time, all for the sake of the gospel. That's because the gospel is a big deal. And so we're gonna spend time this first year during this course talking about how the gospel makes us better disciples.

We're gonna talk about how disciples get the gospel. We'll talk about how disciples gather around the gospel. We'll talk about how disciples, we grow up in the gospel. And finally, we'll look at how we as disciples of Jesus go out with the gospel, right?

So the first thing we wanna talk about is the gospel, right? And before we can kind of get into what it is, I think we need to talk about what the gospel isn't, right? So what the gospel isn't, the gospel is not just the ABCs of Christianity, right?

[1 : 07] That's what I think a lot of us think. We think that it's kind of where we start before we get to the good stuff. It's sort of like the baby steps, if you will, just the beginning stages of what Christianity's all about.

And so you learn these things quickly so you can advance to the really good stuff. But the gospel's not that. It's not a kiddie pool, you know, that little baby Christians can swim and play in, you know, until they really are ready to tackle something, you know, more significant.

The gospel's not just for those who aren't yet Christians. I think a lot of folks think that the gospel is for the sinners, and it is. But it's not just for those people, right?

The gospel is definitely not just some good advice we should try to follow. It's not. It's not do this and you'll be better. That's not the gospel, right?

And the gospel is, and this is an easy one, the gospel is not just, you know, the books of the Bible that are referred to as the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. So the gospel's not that. It's not a genre of music. It's not good advice.

[2 : 06] It's not, you know, the kiddie pool or the ABCs. So what is the gospel, okay? What is the gospel? Essentially, let me just give you a definition as basic as I can get it.

The gospel is, it's the good news of what Jesus Christ has done for us. That's what the gospel is. The word actually means good news, right? It is the good news of what Jesus has done for us.

It is the story of the Bible. It is the foundation of the entire Christian life, right? It's the whole thing, right? That means that the gospel is not just the ABCs.

It means it's not just a place to start. It means it's not just for the not yet Christians. It means it's not good advice, right? Now, here's what I wanna say is when I first heard this kind of stuff, and I'd been in church a long time, it blew my mind.

I mean, it took me a very long time to get my head and to get my heart around how different what I thought the gospel was and what I learned the gospel is. And so let's just take a couple minutes together and look at some of these things that we've mentioned.

[3 : 04] Firstly, the gospel is not good advice. It's good news, right? It's good news. It's not good advice. There's a big difference between those two things, right?

Like I said, the word gospel actually means good news. Here's the thing. With good advice, you try to follow it. That's what you do with advice. You go, thanks for that advice. I'm gonna try to follow that. And some of us have treated the Bible like this.

We've gone, okay, here's a bunch of rules I need to try to follow. I met a guy on a plane one time who told me that he wasn't necessarily following Jesus. He was just gonna keep the 10 commandments.

And I just thought that was the craziest thing I'd ever heard in my life. I mean, it's terrifying for me to think that I could try to, that's what I had to do is I had to keep all the 10 commandments and then me and God would figure out how I did at the end.

I know how I'm gonna do. I'm not gonna do good, right? The thing is with that following the 10 commandments, I'm gonna follow the teachings of Jesus. We treat it like advice. The reality is that you and I are never gonna be able to do that.

[4 : 04] We can never do that perfectly, right? And so what that results in is really two things. We either end up in pride or we end up in despair. Either we get crushed by the reality that we cannot do this and we end up in despair or we actually begin to judge ourselves by judging other people.

And we think, okay, because I'm doing better than all these guys, I'm following the advice better than these guys, I must be doing okay. And that's just pride, right? The result of trying to follow good advice always leads to pride or to despair.

And that's not where the gospel leads us. Good news, on the other hand, if we're gonna follow good news, what does it mean to respond to good news? Well, it just firstly means to believe it, just to accept it.

This is news of something that's happened. It just changes everything. And then once we believe it, we begin to live in light of it. We begin to live in response to it. We begin to live like we believe it.

We begin to wanna share it with other people. I mean, the best news we've ever heard, we wanna shout it from the rooftops, right? So it's not good advice, it's good news. The next thing I would say is that the gospel is not just the ABCs, it's the A through Z, if we wanna use that analogy, right?

[5 : 20] The ABC suggests this is just somewhere you and I start and then we get to the good stuff. But actually, the gospel is the good stuff. We don't graduate on from the gospel, the gospel is the good stuff, right?

Right, the Bible shows us the whole thing. The whole thing is about Jesus. The whole thing is about the gospel, right? Charles Spurgeon said something like this. He said, when you and I read the Old Testament, even though you're not seeing Jesus's name in there, he says, you think of all those scriptures in the Old Testament, like they have red threads attached to them.

And if you pulled on those red threads, you'd find that they were red because the cross was bleeding backwards into the Old Testament. The whole Bible is setting us up for this story. And we're gonna get into that in some of the future videos.

The Old Testament is not God in a bad mood. It's not. It's God setting the stage for the most amazing event in the history of the whole world. It's not just the ABCs.

It's the A through Z, right? That's what the gospel is. Also, this is a little funny. The gospel is an indicative. It's not just a bunch of imperatives. Now, just hang on. I'm not using big words to try to use big words on you.

[6 : 21] This is important to understand. Here's what an indicative is. An indicative is something that's been done, right? It's already happened. And imperatives are things that we must do. It's imperative that you do this.

It's a rule. And I think a lot of us think about Christianity like a list of imperatives. We think what the gospel is, is here's a bunch of things you and I must do, okay? But actually, what the Bible tells us is that it's firstly about what's something that's been done for us, right?

If you think about the gospel like this, think about Christianity like this. If I keep all the rules, then God will love me. Now, maybe you wouldn't say that out loud because you don't wanna be wrong, but a lot of us live like that.

If I keep all the rules, then God will love me. But here's what that does. It puts the rules in front of the relationship. That's what it does. It makes God's love for us contingent on our ability to obey him, which we've already said we can't do perfectly.

So how are we gonna get this perfect love of God if we can't obey perfectly? If the rules are in front of the relationship, we're doomed, right? That doesn't sound like good news to me. I'm trying to keep God's rules.

[7 : 27] I'm trying to do all the imperatives, but I can't risk God's love being dependent on that because I can't keep those rules perfectly. As Paul says, do what I don't wanna do. I keep on doing what I don't wanna do, right?

So the gospel is not keep all the rules so that God will love you. Listen, this is the difference. The gospel is keep all the rules because God has loved you. Keep the rules because God has so loved you, right?

He so loved us, he sent his only son to die for us, right? That's the gospel. Think about how plainly it's spelled out in 1 John 4, 19. We love because he first loved us.

You know how easy it would be for the Bible to say this and said, we love so that he will love us? You could easily say that, but it doesn't. Again and again, what we see is the Bible telling us that we only love, we only obey, we only do these things because God has first loved us, right?

The indicative comes before the imperatives. What Jesus has done is what fuels what you and I do, right? The gospel is about something that's already happened. It's good news. Good advice would be keep all the rules.

[8 : 33] Good news is Jesus has kept the rules for you. Good advice would be try to be perfect. Maybe God will love you. Good news is Jesus was perfect so that God would have a perfect relationship with you in love, right?

We can't do anything to add to that. You and I can't add one single thing to that. All we can do is respond with a life of thankfulness and gratitude to the sacrifice. That's all you and I can do is live in response to what Jesus has already done.

We can't change the news. We can't add to the news. It's been done, right? It was done for us long before we were born. And that's what makes the gospel so different than everything else, every other philosophy, every other religion.

Everything else is do better, try harder. Do better, try harder. And the gospel is, hey, live in light of what Jesus has already done for you. The dying words of the Buddha were strive without ceasing.

That encompasses basically every other philosophy and every other religion on the planet. Strive without ceasing. Fingers crossed, maybe you'll reach nirvana or maybe you'll, actually the gospel is so different.

[9 : 36] You know what the last words of Jesus were? It is finished, right? Tete le stai, it is paid in full, Jesus says. It's done, it's finished, it's over. I've done it for you.

So different, man. The gospel is so different. And the last thing I wanna leave you with on this is the gospel is for everyone. It's for everyone, right? The gospel is not just for the sinner, it's for the saint.

It's for all of us, right? The gospel is for everyone. It's not just at the beginning, it's for the whole journey. You know, I grew up thinking that the gospel was for the people who are really far from God.

The Bible tells us the gospel is for those who knew they were far and those who thought they were near. It's not just for rebellious rule breakers, it's for self-righteous rule keepers. The gospel is for everyone.

Those who can't seem to get it together and those who look like they've got it all together, the gospel is for both of us. We all need the gospel. It's for everyone, right? Now, maybe watching this video, you kind of got something surprising happen to you.

[10 : 39] Maybe for the first time, you really saw what the gospel is. You've never actually responded to that. What you've done is gone to church and tried to keep the rules. Fingers crossed, you're gonna see a light at the end of a tunnel. God's gonna love you, God's gonna save you, but it's gonna be based on your ability.

Man, that is not the gospel. It's exhausting to act like that, live like that, think like that. Maybe right now, for the first time, surprisingly, you thought you were Christian, but actually what you've done is just tried to keep the rules and you realize I've never actually just surrendered to this.

Jesus, you did it in my place. And if that's you, I mean, we just wanna take a second and invite you to really consider what would it look like to stop trying to save yourself, to just surrender to Jesus and just trust him.

Let me read another verse from 1 John 4. Look at this. Verse 10, he says, and this is love. Not that we have loved God, but that he loved us.

And how did he do that? Well, he sent his son to be the propitiation or the payment for our sin. That's what love looks like. Scandalous.

[11 : 43] This relationship between us and God is not because we've loved God, it's because he's loved us. And while we were still dead in sin, Jesus died for us. And if you've never really realized that before right now, God is displaying his love to you, he wants you to see that.

He wants you to surrender to that. He doesn't want you just to move on. He wants you to stop and just surrender. And I would encourage you to do that right now. Just stop and pray and just say, Jesus, I surrender. I'm gonna stop trying to save myself.

I'm gonna put my hope in you and your finished work. And I know that's gonna mean my life's gonna have to look different, but it's gonna be because of what you've done, not so that you'll do something for me. If that's you and you pray that, I would encourage you to tell your group about it and find a pastor and tell your friends and they'll come around and they'll try to help you with next steps and baptism and all those things, right?

But this is an incredible moment if that's you for the first time. And for you guys now who are gonna jump into your groups and discuss this, I just wanna say, we're really praying that these times of discussion in your group would be really fruitful and helpful.

and we just wanna ask you to come into those conversations with a sense of excitement and faith and thank God together for the gospel.

[12 : 57] Ask questions. Talk about where you're struggling with this. Talk about where you struggle to believe or to apply the gospel to your own life. Listen to other people and encourage them and speak the truth of the gospel to them, right?

And pray for God to give you more opportunities to share this incredible good news. We don't wanna be dispensers of good advice. We wanna be heralds of this good news called the gospel. Love you guys.

Hope that was helpful. And I'll see you next time.