

Evangelism Core Seminar
Session 1: Introduction
September 4, 2005
Teacher's Guide

Introduction: Our Task in Evangelism

A. Course Overview

- **Hand out course outline, index cards, and class handout as students are entering.**
- **Welcome the class to the Evangelism Core Seminar.**
- **Introduce yourself to the class.**

[Highlight the theme of the Christian Growth Track of the Core Seminars]

You are in the first class of the Christian Growth Track. If you look at the Core Seminars brochure, you'll see that there is a deliberate layout to the classes. If you wanted to simplify the breakdown of the Core Seminar structure, you could say that the first four tracks are meant to cultivate a love for God. The fifth track, however, is meant to cultivate and encourage a love and passion for others. Jesus summarized the Christian life when he summarized the law by saying that the Law commands a love for God and a love for others. As Christians we must realize that God has chosen to set his love on us and on others, and so he has called each of us who know his love to share that love with others. This is how we chiefly love others, by telling others about God's love in the good news of Jesus Christ. So, naturally, the Christian Growth track begins with evangelism.

As we begin this study, let's set this simple but powerful theme on our hearts and minds – that we are called to love others – and let it be an encouragement and a challenge as we learn the lessons of this Core Seminar and the others to come, Lord willing.

[Pray]

[Read]

At one time, we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. (Titus 3:3-8)

I think that these verses from Titus will be our challenge and our hope in this class. If you are a Christian, you're sitting here in this class because someone shared the Gospel with you. With God's help, they found the appropriate words and overcame barriers and fears. They believed that God would convert you through the powerful witness of His Gospel. They were motivated by God's love and equipped by God's Spirit to share the Gospel with you. And, by God's grace, you were saved.

Thus, the goal of the Evangelism core seminar is simply to motivate, equip, and prepare us to share the Good News. This is our challenge, hope, and calling as Christians.

So, how are we going to do that? How will we go about becoming equipped and prepared to share the gospel?

[COURSE OUTLINE – Read the intro paragraph of the course outline through the four bullet points.]

The Evangelism Core Seminar is a **training course** for evangelism. The goals of the course are to learn:

- What evangelism is
- Why Christians should engage in evangelism
- How Christians should engage the world through evangelism
- Doing evangelism

[Have each person write down on the index card the names of three people (family, friends, or co-workers) they will pray for and reach out to.]

I would encourage you to write down the names of three or more people you know who are non-Christians. They may be family, friends, or co-workers. You may want to stick this card in your Bible so that you are reminded to pray for them regularly during your quiet times.

One other thing that I would encourage you to consider doing is asking someone to hold you accountable for praying for these people as well as encouraging one another to share the Gospel with them.

Now, a good question at this point would be: What resources and support material will we be using to do all this? We have a clear vision of where we want to go, as we just saw in our outline. We have defined our goals: to become equipped, motivated, and prepared for evangelism. What then do we have to help us get there?

[Introduce course materials (Resources)]

The curriculum for the next 13 weeks draws from five resources; I would encourage you to invest all of these – they're great resources to have:

1. *The Bible*
2. Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth*
3. J. Mack Stiles, *Speaking of Jesus*
4. J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*
5. *Two Ways to Live* (Gospel Outline)

[Questions]

Are there any questions at this point?

Our goal in the first two classes is to address the question, "What is evangelism?" In next week's class, we will actually spend some time defining terms together. This week, in this first lesson, we want to set the stage and look at the context in which we understand and actually do evangelism.

B. Engaging Our World

First, let's make an attempt to broadly understand evangelism. Evangelism is a broad subject.

[Question]

So, how would you define evangelism?

[Let the class give a couple of examples.]

Don Whitney writes that evangelism is, “to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to sinful people, in order that they may come to put their trust in God through Him as the Savior, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of the His church.” That’s a pretty detailed and thorough definition, isn’t it? Basically, we are to engage our world with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Practically, what does that look like?

- ***At First It Seemed So Simple***

[Give a brief description of your own personal struggles/growths with evangelism.]

For me, in my evangelism, I started out with confidence, boldness, and directness. I was quickly shot down by my friends, and still I persisted. I kept at it again and again, but they just didn’t seem to get it and so I became confused about how to pursue evangelism and exactly what it was to look like. This still happens to me sometimes. I think that I am making the gospel incredibly clear, but the person I am speaking with does not seem to hear what I am saying. One of my struggles is that fear can often develop within me, and I start to wonder if my friendship with this person can survive my gospel assault.

- I can be overbearing in evangelism.
- I can sometimes have selective hearing

[Question]

What about you? What are some of the struggles and concerns you have with evangelism?

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- Unconcern/lack of motivation
- Heart for lost
- Manufactured presentation
- Lack of faith – not seeing results
- Missed opportunities/unprepared
- Boldness

- Lack of joy in gospel itself
 - Lack of confidence in words
 - Relying too much on our ability
 - Pride
 - Lack of non-Christian friends
 - Unprepared
 - Lack of courage/confidence
-

[Write down the Concerns/Struggles/Expectations at the end of the class. Save these for the last class, where you can review them and see how the class has hopefully addressed these issues.]

Will Metzger gives a good illustration: "I feel like I'm caught in a revolving door. Certain questions keep twirling me around"

- In what way am I obligated to those God brings across my path?
- What are the essential elements of our message?
- Why is there such disagreement, confusion, and vagueness among those who witness, even on some very basic elements of the gospel, such as: Why is the new birth necessary? What is our part in salvation and what is God's? How can a person know he or she is born again?"

All of these questions could be boiled down to one: "What is the right way to witness?" That's the question of this course. What is the right way to witness? We understand, pretty simply, what evangelism is, right? How then do we take it down to the particular, personal level of everyday life?

What was the purpose of this exercise (of thinking through our struggles and concerns about evangelism)? I think it will give us a good starting point to begin addressing this driving question: What is the right way to witness? Clearly defining our struggles and expectations here at the beginning will set us on the right track to grow personally in our own evangelism.

C. Understanding and Evaluating Evangelism

1. Can we find any definitive solution?

It's clear that everyone can identify with the questions and struggles of actually doing evangelism. Evangelism may be easy to define, perhaps, but I think that we all know it harder to live out. Hopefully, this class will help each of us, including me, as I hear your admonishments and encouragements. But we want to come up with a prescription only after a thorough diagnosis. Step one, then, is diagnosis. We need to evaluate and understand how we're doing evangelism, that is, we need to look at our methodology. How?

2. The Virtue of Evaluation

Let me suggest first, that we need to start by asking, could some aspects of contemporary evangelism that influence us lack biblical integrity? We need to evaluate our practices in evangelism. This will be one of the goals of this core seminar:

- To pose pertinent questions concerning the theology underlying the methodology in modern evangelism. That is, should any tradition, technique, or person be beyond our evaluation by Scriptural standards?

Metzger writes, "Let us be willing to reexamine our theology of evangelism by Scripture, for otherwise our evangelism may be infected by prejudice, pragmatism, and sin. If, however, we are convinced there is a theological reason behind our methodology, then we may be justified in evangelizing accordingly...A scriptural doctrine of evangelism should be the controlling element in any practice of evangelism" (Metzger, 15). If you look at the course outline, you'll see that this will be the focus of the first part (roughly the first third) of the course – taking a thorough look at current evangelistic practice.

The main point here is, when we or someone else or some program is heading full speed ahead down the road seeking to evangelize – let's start by making sure we're on a biblical, God-centered road.

So, if we understand the need to evaluate – to diagnose – correctly, how do we get there? That is, how do we effectively diagnose of our own evangelism and the current evangelistic practices of the day? Take, for example, a doctor who provides a diagnosis, he looks at the whole body, trying to examine its varying and interrelated elements. Our job is no different – we also need to look at the elements that make up the normal Christian evangelist. To this, I would like to look at four points:

1. Our methodology. We're all going to need one. Lord willing, it will be biblical. The point here is to find a clearly defined biblical vision, strategy, and method.
2. Our Fears – what hinders us in our evangelism? Why?
3. Our attitude and motivations – what motivates us and why? Or what squashes our motivation?
4. Our Prayers – do we let God lead us through prayer?

If we can look at these four points briefly, we will be at a better starting point to both understand evangelism (i.e., what it is) and evaluate and diagnose it in our own lives accordingly (i.e., how we should respond).

D. The Normal Christian Evangelist

1. The need for a method

First, it is incredibly helpful to have a clearly defined strategy. We can arrive at our destination when we have a good roadmap and we follow that map well. The question is do we have one? If so, do we follow it?

We all need to re-examine our evangelism to make sure that we do not simply talk about the gospel or that we are so interested in applying the gospel (getting results) that we slight the theological content (Metzger, 108). We will be working this methodology out for the rest of the core seminar – until the very last class.

The main point here is that we need to be deliberate about building a biblical method and strategy for evangelism. And we should comfortable using it. That way, we can use it over

and over again. There's no problem being repetitive and using the same method, assuming it's biblical.

I would encourage you to make it a goal to define a biblical method of evangelism in which you feel comfortable, empowered, and equipped to serve God in proclaiming His Gospel. One of my hopes for this class is that the Lord would use it to strengthen your ability to speak of Jesus. Therefore, be deliberate in defining your methodology, remembering that our theology drives our methodology.

Ok, so we want to have a method that we can and do use, but what prevents action? What are the things that stop us from evangelism on a daily basis, even if we have a method we are comfortable with? This brings us to our second point.

2. Our Fears

Evangelism is not just for the super-Christians; the Bible is clear that all real Christians have this privilege and calling (Acts 8:1, 4; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Matt. 28). Even motivated Christians will struggle as they witness. The basis of these struggles often seems to be fear.

We've already thought through some of these fears.

[Refer the class back to our list of struggles/concerns in evangelism.]

We may feel insecure because we fear how people will respond to our message. But let's remember that God is strong in our weaknesses. Both the OT and NT show how God's ministry was carried out by very ordinary and weak people.

My friends, the starting point for evangelism is you and me. Theologically, God can use anything, but in a real practical sense God has chosen you and me to be his ambassadors on this earth.

If we are going to evaluate our evangelism and our fears then we need to humbly ask God to expose them to us and to empower us by His Spirit to overcome them.

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 6:19 is appropriate for us: "Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will *fearlessly* make known the mystery of the gospel." Friends, this is Paul, the great missionary and evangelist. Here he asks for the Ephesians to pray for him. Take heart and follow Paul's example. Ask another to pray for you in this way. Ask them to pray that God would use you to fearlessly make known the mystery of His gospel.

And this brings us to our third point. Do we have the right mindset or attitude and motivation in our evangelism?

3. Our Attitude and Motivation

An obvious truth in this life is that we can only talk about the things we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20). I cannot talk about the complexities of neurosurgery because I am not a doctor. But those who actually want to share the good news of Jesus are Christians, and thus we have seen and heard the very truths we seek to share with others.

So, what have we seen and heard? What are some truths that motivate us?

1. God's command to make disciples. He has called us to go out and make disciples, and there is no doubt that he is going to empower us to do that work.
2. Our experience of His love as we look back at the ways he has moved in our lives. We can see evidences of His work in our lives, and that should motivate us.
3. The desperate need of others (should also motivate us). We should see their sinful state, and be motivated to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Why then is lack of motivation often a problem? There are many reasons...

1. Unconfessed or unrepentant sin – this can often occupy our minds and cause us to doubt whether or not God could really use us

2. If we are waiting for that inner urge before we tell someone the gospel, it will probably never come.
3. Selfishness is often at the root of our disobedience
4. Inexperience or perhaps a bad experience of previous evangelism
5. A lack of motivation for many can be that we have "no gift" in evangelism.

In all these examples, our hearts can turn cold. How do we stop this? How can we stay motivated? Let me note three things. These are good points to use for self-examination this week in your quiet times.

1. First, focus on grace and unmerited mercy. Let's rest in God's kindness. This will soften our hard hearts. As John Piper proclaims relentlessly in many of his sermons and books, God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. And we can only be satisfied when we are utterly and desperately dependent upon His grace. Remember, God goes before us in each encounter with unbelievers.

Knowing the God who grants faith and life should calm our fears and remove timidity. When we rest in God's grace, we realize that there is no room for pride when you are next to the Cross. The cross cultivates humility and boldness.

2. Secondly, once you've been humbled and emboldened by God's grace, be honest. That is, be honest in your witness. Honesty is often the opening to a genuine witness and in a strange way I think that the Lord uses it to establish credibility with unbelievers. God's strength is shown to be great in our weaknesses.

3. Thirdly, we need compassion – we need love for others. The glue for a Christ-like friendship is love and faithfulness. In today's culture what seems to be valued most is Oneself. The god of this age is I. Opposed to this is the biblical concept of love. Love extends itself not for the sake of I but for the sake of another. This is what Christ did for us preeminently on the cross and this is what he calls us to do for others – to give up the love of I for the love of God and for the love of others.

[Take a question or comment]

So far, we've looked at the need of a method, our fears, and our motivations and attitudes. This takes us to our fourth and final point. Prayer and the Spirit. In the NT, boldness in prayer seems to precede boldness in evangelism.

4. Prayer and the Spirit

Prayer for others is a God-ordained foundation for evangelism. Prayer is pleading our helplessness before God. JI Packer once wrote, "God will make us pray before he blesses our labors in order that we may constantly learn afresh that we depend upon God for everything" (pg.178 of *Tell the Truth*).

This is the point of those index cards. Let's show ourselves to be dependent on God and set ourselves to pray that he would empower us with his Spirit and that he would use us in bring the lost to Him for His glory.

E. Evangelism as a Discipline

This brings us to the end of our first class. I'd like to end this class by considering evangelism as a discipline.

Don Whitney, in his *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*, asserts that Godliness requires that we discipline ourselves in the practice of evangelism. He concludes that evangelism is expected – the Lord Jesus Christ Himself commanded it. Evangelism is also empowered – the Holy Spirit empowers us to speak the gospel as we live out our faith, and evangelism is a discipline – evangelism should be a natural overflow of our love for others.

Therefore, we must obey, believing that God can use us in the salvation of others, and, finally, since it's a discipline, we must plan for it. I think that one of the main reasons that we don't

witness is that we don't discipline ourselves to do it. We don't often build into our lives time to share the Gospel with non-Christians that we have relationships with. My prayer is that God will use this class to develop this discipline for the purpose of Godliness. With God's help lets challenge each other reach out to the world and share with them the joy, hope, and peace that comes from knowing Jesus Christ. Let's pray and ask God to use this class and our time during the week to grow us in the discipline of evangelism.

Comments or Questions?

Give out email – mike.law@capitolhillbaptist.org

Conclude the class with prayer.

C. Understanding and Evaluating Evangelism

1. Can we find any definitive solution?

- The starting point for evangelism is you Theologically, God can use anything, but in a real practical sense God has chosen you and me to be his ambassadors on this earth.

2. The Virtue of Evaluation

3. Our Attitude and Motivation

What are some truths that motivate us?

- God's command to make disciples
- Our experience of His love as we look back at the ways he has moved in our lives The desperate need of others

Why is lack of motivation often a problem?

- Unconfessed or unrepentant sin
- If we are waiting for that inner urge before we tell someone the gospel, it will probably never come.
- Selfishness is often at the root of our disobedience
- Inexperience or perhaps a bad experience
- We think we have "no gift" in evangelism

What can we do? How do we combat these things?

Three things:

1. We need to focus on grace and remember that God goes before us in each encounter with an unbeliever. The cross cultivates humility and boldness.

2. We must be ourselves and be honest in our witness. Honesty is often the opening to a genuine witness.

D. The Normal Christian Evangelist

1. *The need for a method*

Be deliberate in defining your methodology, remembering that theology drives methodology.

2. Our Fears

- Evangelism is not just for the super-Christians; the Bible is clear that all Christians have this privilege and calling.

- Our weaknesses can become the means through which God works in evangelism. Both the OT and NT show how God's ministry was carried out by very ordinary people.

3. We need compassion; love for others. The glue for Christ-like friendship is loyalty and faithfulness.

- This is the "cost" of being a Christian but it is also its privilege because it is how God shows His love for us –through the way we love one another.

4. *Prayer and the Spirit*

Prayer is a God-ordained foundation of evangelism. Prayer is pleading our helplessness before God.

E. Evangelism as a Discipline

Evangelism is a discipline

Evangelism is expected – the Lord Jesus Christ Himself commanded it.

Evangelism is empowered – the Holy Spirit empowers us as we live out our faith sincerely

Evangelism is a discipline – evangelism is a natural overflow of the Christian life. Therefore, we must obey, we must believe that God can use us in the salvation of others, and, finally, since it's a discipline, we must plan for it.

Will you?

Session 1: Introduction

At one time, we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. (Titus 3:3-8)

Introduction: Our Task in Evangelism

A. Course Overview

- "Christian Growth" Track – a passion for others
- Course Goal of the "Evangelism" Core Seminar: to equip, motivate, and prepare you to share the Good News.
- Today's class goal: a general introduction to understand what evangelism is and how it relates and applies to us.
- Definition –

B. Engaging Our World

- At First It Seemed So Simple

Expectations/Struggles:

**Evangelism Core Seminar
Session 2: Defining Terms
Teacher's Guide
September 11, 2005**

- **Welcome the class to the Evangelism Core Seminar**
- **Introduce yourself**
- **Plug books**

I. Review

As we saw last week, the Christian Growth track could be described as a track that is dedicated to cultivating *a love for others*. And the goal of this core seminar is to develop that passion for others by helping us to be equipped, motivated, and available for Evangelism.

We began our task last week with an introductory overview, looking at our struggles and concerns in evangelism, as well as some of our expectations for this core seminar. We began understanding and addressing these concerns by studying the "normal Christian evangelist," looking at the need for a biblically driven method. We also looked at our fears, our attitudes, and our motivations in evangelism. After that, we noted that prayer for others is a foundation for God-centered evangelism. To that end, hopefully, we are committed to praying for fruit in the lives of others.

I would encourage you to follow the example of the apostle Paul when he wrote to the Ephesians. In verse 6:20 we find Paul asking the Ephesians to pray for him. He wrote "Pray for me, that I may declare it [meaning the Gospel] fearlessly as I should."

[Pray]

[Read verse]

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20)

[Question]

- What does Jesus command us to do?
- Who is he talking to?
- Based upon what you know about these disciples, were they obedient?

[Allow for answers]

The disciples did learn and obey Christ's command to evangelize. We read of that great truth in Acts when the church explodes onto the scene by thousands being added to their number. This passage provides an Example, the disciples (handout reference). It also provides our Exhortation, to make disciples and to baptize them. And finally, this passage provides us with an Encouragement, that God will be with us always.

So, the question that remains for us is, "How do we model this example and obey Jesus' exhortation? How is this applied to our lives?" To address this question, our class goal today is three-fold: To define terms, understand our job description, and diagnose ourselves as evangelists. So, let's start first with defining terms.

II. What is Evangelism (Witnessing)?

Before we can engage in evangelism, we need to clearly understand what it is and the biblical language associated with it.

Main idea: That there are great individual and corporate misunderstandings of what *evangelism/witnessing* is. I will be using the word evangelism, as I am recognizing these words as synonyms. Let me say at the outset that biblical evangelism illuminates and glorifies God. But that's still not a definition.

[Question]

"How would you define evangelism?"

[Allow 2-3 examples. Read footnote 2 of Chapter 1 in Tell the Truth for a definition of evangelism in the Greek.]

(1) Narrowly defined, evangelism is stating gospel facts to a non-believer. However, this definition is not complete. Why not?

(2) Well, let me ask: "What is the chief end of man?" The chief end of man is not "to be a super soul-winner night and day," but as the Westminster Catechism says, it is "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." This means that we, as whole people, are to know God and keep God in focus in all that we do.

Clearly, the way we live is an important aspect of our witness. Yet our life is to be coupled with telling people God's truth. This is the primary aspect of our evangelism. People need to be told who it is that makes our lives different. Our lives, then, will illuminate the truth that we express to non-believers.

(3) Illustration of Christian Evangelism

If there's one picture that I want you to leave with about what evangelism is it's this: Think of Christian witnessing as an airplane with two wings: our lives (conduct) and our lips (our conversation).

So, let's take the two wings of that airplane and think about them for a minute.

(4) First, SPEAK – to remain silent and let others put interpretations upon our actions is wrong. God Himself did not do this. *The great pivotal points of God's redemptive action in history are accompanied with verbal revelation.* God wanted us to understand the meaning of His actions and so he has defined and clarified why he has acted, and he has done this by preserving His word in written form.

Likewise, we must speak –and speak of Christ – even if we sense our own inconsistency of life. We must speak when it's inconvenient. God is bigger than our sins, our ignorance, and our pride. He will honor his Word, regardless of the people who carry it, and sometimes in

spite of the people who carry it. Often, He does this to make the point that He is the one who deserves credit for making old things new.

Now let's consider the second wing, our lives.

(5) Second, ACT – At times our actions do speak well of the One who we proclaim as King. God didn't send a tract, He prepared a body. The Scriptures tell us that Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us. Likewise, God has prepared our bodies to demonstrate Him. We are to dwell here on this earth for the purpose of bringing him glory with our lips and with our lives.

1 Peter 2:11-12 captures this idea well, Peter exhorts the Christians there to "live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." Here, Peter exhorts Christians to live Godly lives, so that the pagans may glorify God. What glory can the pagans offer God? None, apart from God bringing them to saving faith in Jesus Christ. *God delights in using a visible reflection of his holiness on earth [in his people], so that he might make clear the truth and reality of his gospel in the hearts of sinners.* He delights in having the message of his gospel proclaimed and lived out.

Reflecting on these verses Wayne Grudem writes, "Here Peter is stating in summary form what he goes on to explain in detail through the end of the epistle: Christians living in an unbelieving society must avoid sinful desires and continually maintain exemplary patterns of life, so that unbelievers will be saved and God glorified" (*Wayne Grudem, Tyndale: 1 Peter Commentary*).

We need to be creative and selfless in our love to others. We need to learn how to be friends. We also need to perceive the needs of others and do something for them, all the while understanding that a pagan's greatest need is to know Jesus. We must be sure that we are not condescending. If we are friendly only as long as the unbeliever is interested in discussing the gospel, we don't know much about friendship. We need to listen and seek to serve, not just talk. And friends, I am the chief person that needs to hear that message.

III. The Difference Between Evangelism and Testimony

[Question]

“Is there a difference between *evangelism* and *testimony*?” “If so, what’s the difference?”

[Allow 2-3 examples]

Simply stated, the difference between the two is that one is a message about what God has done to save sinners (evangelism), and the other is about what God has done to save a sinner (testimony).

In our evangelism, we need to make clear certain things about God and his nature, Christ and his nature, man and his nature, and a particular response and its nature. The content of witnessing or evangelism is not solely our journey to faith. Specific truths about a specific person are the subject of our proclamation.

To guard our evangelism, we should ask ourselves evaluation questions. Consider these three:

- What did I say about Christ?
- What did I say about myself?
- Who was more prominent?

Using these three questions to evaluate our evangelism will help us to maintain a God-centered focus of evangelism, rather than a “me-centered” focus.

I just want to make a side comment on a healthy Christian testimony. Consider the example of two people who are very much in love. Often, you find them expressing many things about their loved one and not always focusing on themselves. It is the same with a healthy testimony about God, who has set his love upon us and graciously given us a love for him.

[Question]

“Why is it important to distinguish between *evangelism* and *testimony*?” In an age of religious pluralism, we are finding many who are testifying. (Example: My sister and evangelism). We must make sure that the Gospel is clear in our evangelism, and that we are not just talking about ourselves.

In his book, *Tell the Truth*, Will Metzger tells of an experience he had when he had finished speaking to a young man about the change Christ had made in his life. The young man responded sincerely, “Transcendental Meditation does the same for me.” What would you have said in reply? If our witness has no more content than this, we can expect the typical response: “That’s interesting. I’m glad for you, but what you have isn’t for me.” I am sure many of us have had a similar experience; I know I have. So, if we understand what evangelism is, and how it is different than our testimony, let’s finish defining terms by looking some of the words we will likely utilize in our evangelism.

IV. Language Barriers Worksheet

To finish our look at defining terms, I’d like to take a few minutes to define some important Christian terms that might act as language barriers to non-Christians. For instance, a friend of mine was talking to a non-Christian about grace, and he stopped my friend and said, “Grace, grace, grace, what do you mean by grace!?”

Tell the class: “Think of a time in the past where you shared the Gospel. Then ask yourself, “Did I use words that the person understood?”

The point: it’s important to describe basic Christian truths in words that everyone will understand.

[Hand out the worksheet 1/Language barriers. Take 10 minutes to go over these terms as a class and define them in everyday language.]

Language Barriers

Explain the following terms in your own words, as if you were talking with someone who had no biblical background. Do not use any of the words listed in your explanations. Use synonyms where possible or a short phrase; no long sentences.

1. **Grace – unmerited or undeserved favor; giving us what we don't deserve**
2. **Mercy – charity; compassionate forbearance; withholding what we deserve**
3. **Lost – separated from God**
4. **Saved – rescued by God (from God)**
5. **Born again – a birth by the Spirit which converts one from following one's self to following Christ (John 3)**
6. **Repent – to turn from rebellion**
7. **Believe – to trust in Christ as Lord and Savior, and demonstrate that by obeying Him**
8. **Justified – declared not guilty and declared righteous**
9. **Atonement – payment and the means for reconciliation**
10. **Propitiation – appeasement of God's wrath**
11. **Spiritual – not worldly; of the Holy Spirit**
12. **Sanctified – set apart; made holy**
13. **Holy – literally means "separate" or "other;" pure; clean; without blemish**
14. **Sin – rebellion**
15. **Salvation – saved from the consequences of rebellion, which leads to eternal death, and restored for eternity in the presence of God**
16. **Saving Faith – life-saving, evident faith**
17. **Redemption – redeem/release/buy back from eternal death (Romans 3:24)**
18. **God – triune, infinite, personal, holy, just, righteous Creator, Savior, and Lord**
19. **Gospel – the Good News of Jesus Christ: God, Man, Christ, Response**
20. **The finished work of Christ on the Cross – God's victory over sin**

V. Getting our Job Description Right - Do Results Count?

We've asked, "What is evangelism," and we have just defined some terms that go along with it. To round out our session today, let's go on to our second goal of looking at our job descriptions by asking, "In our definition of evangelism, Do results count?"

[Question]

Well, do results count? What do you think?

[Allow a couple of responses.]

One crucial thing we must remember in evangelism is the distinction between our responsibility and God's prerogative. Our task is to present faithfully the gospel message.

Any definition of our task in evangelism which includes results is confusing our responsibility with God's prerogative, which is regeneration. We may sow and water, but it is God who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:5-9). We *may* reap – but only when God has brought the grain to maturity.

To define evangelism in terms of results is wrong – it merely becomes a quantitative procedure. However, I think that we should have a holy dissatisfaction with negative results in our evangelism. As Christians we should desire to see God glorified in the conversion of sinners. But this is why we pray, to show our dependence upon him, asking Him to convert sinners, for His glory.

If we think wrongly about our definition of evangelism, we are likely to act wrongly in our methods of evangelism.

Main idea: We must remember it is not us but it is the Holy Spirit who works in the hearts of non-Christians to bring about salvation.

J.I. Packer says it like this: "our evangelistic work is the instrument that He uses for this purpose [of salvation], but the power that saves is not in the instrument: it is in the hand of the

One [meaning God] who uses the instrument. We must not at any stage forget that. For if we forget that it is God's prerogative to give results when the gospel is preached, we shall start to think that it is our responsibility to secure them... [And] our approach to evangelism would become pragmatic and calculating."

"So, if this is how we understand evangelism, what is our job description?" Here's the application for today, friends. Write these down, memorize them, and pray that God bring them to fruition for His glory. These are from Mack Stiles' book, "Speaking of Jesus." In evangelism, we must be:

1. Available – God wants us to be available to people, not just shouting instructions to them. We must be willing to forsake our comfort for the sake of others. We must give of our time to spend time with non-Christians.
2. Equipped – God uses the tools at hand. If you share what you know about Christ when the opportunity comes, God will use you – seminary degree not required.
3. Motivated – "It's not our job. We're not trained. We don't have the right equipment. It's just not our gift." Our Father rescued us because He loved us and wanted us to be spared of His wrath, which we deserved. God wants us to have this love for others and be motivated by this love: not by guilt trips or with gritting-of-teeth or with a bent-up frenzy, but with love.

Our job description for real-life evangelism is to be equipped, available, and motivated, which, if you remember from last week's introductory class, is a key goal of this core seminar.

Think back to the person(s) God, in His sovereignty, used to bring you the Good News. Does this describe them – equipped, motivated, and available? I bet it does. So the question is, "Does this describe you?" We'll finish our class today doing a little self-examination.

VI. Diagnosing Your Evangelistic Condition

Each of these three categories in evangelism is important. Without one of the three, evangelism can be as unstable as a three-legged stool that is missing a leg. Mack Stiles, in "Speaking of Jesus," has put together a chart for diagnosing your evangelistic condition.

[Refer to chart]

DISCLAIMER: PEOPLE ARE FAR MORE COMPLICATED THAN A CHART! This is just a working picture.

Step One: Ask yourself about your strengths and weaknesses

- Motivated – Do I have a heartfelt desire to share the good news of Christ?
- Available – Do I have social contact with non-Christians?
- Equipped – Can I effectively explain the Gospel message?

Step Two: Take your answers and find your diagnosis on chart 1. To find your answer, simply mark a plus sign for "yes" and a minus sign for "no" at the bottom of each of the columns labeled "Motivated," "Available," and "Equipped." Then, find the row that matches your answers. Your diagnosis should be in the fourth column, entitled, "Evangelism diagnosis." So, for example, I would say that I'm motivated and equipped, but I don't feel like I've been available to non-Christians recently. That would make me, according to my answers, plus, plus, minus, which makes me "isolated."

[Make sure class adequately diagnosis' themselves.]

[Ask if there are any questions on how to come up with your diagnosis.]

Step Three: Now match your diagnosis to Chart 2. Simply turn the sheet over and read your diagnosis. So, for example, I was diagnosed as "Isolated."

[Read the chart description for "isolated."]

As I've stated at before, this is the goal of this Core Seminar. As we look around, we all see that there are a lot of people in need of the Christian message. So, make sure you're equipped, motivated, and available to share the good news. Make sure you don't confuse your job description with the Holy Spirit's. Figure out the things that need to happen so that you might be able to engage the world around you. Pray that God would use you to rescue His lost children.

[Question and Answer, time permitting]

Pray!

Diagnosis Chart #1

Motivated	Available	Equipped	Evangelism diagnosis
-	-	-	Sequestered
-	+	-	Apathetic
-	-	+	Academic
+	-	-	Frustrated
-	+	+	Daunted
+	-	+	Isolated
+	+	-	Reckless
+	+	+	Engaged

Language Barriers

Explain the following terms in your own words, as if you were talking with someone who had no biblical background. Do not use any of the words listed in your explanations. Use synonyms where possible or a short phrase; no long sentences.

1. **Grace** –
2. **Mercy** –
3. **Lost** –
4. **Saved** –
5. **Born again** –
6. **Repent** –
7. **Believe** –
8. **Justified** –
9. **Atonement** –
10. **Propitiation** –
11. **Spiritual** –
12. **Sanctified** –
13. **Holy** –
14. **Sin** –
15. **Salvation** –
16. **Saving Faith** –
17. **Redemption** –
18. **God** –
19. **Gospel** –
20. **The finished work of Christ on the Cross** –

3. Illustration of Christian Evangelism

4. SPEAK – to remain silent and let others interpret our actions is wrong. God Himself did not do this.

5. ACT – We need to be creative and selfless in our love to others.

III. The Difference between Evangelism and Testimony

- In our evangelism, we need to make clear certain things about God and his nature, Christ and his nature, man and his nature, and a particular response and its nature. The content of witnessing or evangelism is not solely our journey to faith. Specific truths about Christ are the subject of our proclamation.

- Good evaluation questions are “What did I say about Christ? What did I say about myself? Who was more prominent?”

Why is it important to distinguish between *evangelism* and *testimony*?

IV. Language Barriers Worksheet

V. Getting our Job Description Right - Do Results Count?

“Our evangelistic work is the instrument that He uses for this purpose [salvation], but the power that saves is not in the instrument: it is in the hand of the One who uses the instrument. We must not at any stage forget that. For if we forget that it is God’s prerogative to give results when the gospel is preached, we shall start to think that it is our responsibility to secure them... [And] our approach to evangelism would become pragmatic and calculating.”
--J.I. Packer

Our job description for evangelism is to be available, equipped, and motivated.

- **Available** –
- **Equipped** –

- **Motivated** –

Session 2: Defining Terms

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20)

I. Review

- Example** –
- Exhortation** –
- Encouragement** –

Goals: Define Terms, Understand our Job Description, and Self-Diagnosis.

II. What is Evangelism (witnessing)?

1. Narrowly defined, evangelism is _____
2. The chief end of man is _____

VI. Diagnosing Your Evangelistic Condition

- Step One:* Ask yourself about your strengths and weaknesses (Chart 1)
- Motivated – Do I have a heartfelt desire to share the good news of Christ?
 - Available – Do I have social contact with non-Christians?
 - Equipped – Can I effectively explain the Gospel message?

Step Two: Take your answers and find you diagnosis on chart 1

Step Three: Now match your diagnosis to Chart 2

Homework:
Language Barriers Worksheet
Self-Diagnosis

Evangelism Core Seminar
Session 3: Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God
Teacher's Guide
September 18, 2005

Note: The book edition used for this class is:

Packer, J.I., *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (InterVarsity Press: Downer's Grove, Illinois, 1991).

Divine Sovereignty, Human Responsibility, and Evangelism

Welcome the class to the Evangelism Core Seminar

I. Review

[Briefly review the lessons from Session 2.]

Last week, we defined terms that might be misunderstood by non-Christians, and we did this in the hope of making the gospel clear in our evangelism. We also learned that the key thing to distinguish is the difference between our responsibility in evangelism and God's prerogative. Our task is to present the gospel message faithfully with our lives and with our lips. In order to do that, therefore, our job in evangelism is to be equipped, motivated, and available.

Today, we hope to take an overview of J.I. Packer's book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. This is a great book. That's why we're spending a whole class on it. Now, there's lots of good stuff in here, good stuff that I just could not possibly convey to you in a single 45 minute session. So, let me share with you my goal for today's class. It's two-fold: (1) Provide an overview of this book that should continue to help us build a biblical framework for evangelism; and (2) whet your appetite to go out, buy the book, and read it on your own or with another Christian. ☺

[Pray]

Introduction

Packer's book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* lucidly details the Scriptural doctrine and theology behind these key ideas we've studied the past two weeks. The purpose of this study is the same purpose Packer gives for writing the book. **p.7**

Purpose of book: "It is a piece of biblical and theological reasoning, designed to clarify the relationship between three realities: God's sovereignty, man's responsibility, and the Christian evangelistic duty. **p.8**

Aim of book: "to dispel the suspicion that faith in the absolute sovereignty of God hinders a full recognition and acceptance of evangelistic responsibility, and to show that, on the contrary, only this faith can give Christians the strength that they need to fulfill their evangelistic task."

To this end, Packer uses four sections to address the purpose and aim of his book. These sections are noted in the handout: Divine Sovereignty, Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility, Evangelism, and Divine Sovereignty and Evangelism. I want to provide you with four key words that should correspond with each of these four sections. The four key words are King, Friends, Good News, and Responsibility. ☺ Think of these four topics as the cornerstones of the book, and hopefully they will help you understand the argument in terms of these key concepts.

II. Divine Sovereignty KEY WORD: King

First, let's look at Divine Sovereignty.

[Question]

What is divine sovereignty?

[Allow one or two answers.]

For our purposes, we will use Packer's definitions and parameters: God's sovereignty in grace is "His almighty action in bringing helpless sinners home through Christ to Himself (10)."

I think we want to use his definition in this class because our parameters are generally set around evangelism and Dr. Packer's definition is sharpest at the point we are most currently concerned with, and by that I mean God's sovereignty in salvation.

I want to pause for a moment now and look briefly at a couple of Scripture which I believe support Dr. Packer's definition and inherent claim. Please turn in your Bibles to:

[Supporting Scripture]

- **Ephesians 1:3-14**
- **Romans 8:28-30**

[TRANSITION]

Dr. Packer asserts that Christians believe in the sovereignty of God, and he says he knows this to be true because, as Christians, we pray **[p.11]**. God's sovereignty in His world is proven through prayer. Every time we pray, we confess our inability and God's sovereignty. It is the very nature of prayer.

We acknowledge that God is sovereign in the salvation of others by praying for their conversion. "In prayer, we know that it is God who saves men; we know that what makes men turn to God is God's own gracious work of drawing them to Himself (15)." This determines how we pray.

The purpose and point of the first section is to give us a starting point for the remaining sections. Hence, the keyword to remember for this section is "King." As Packer puts it succinctly, "On our feet we may have arguments about it, but on our knees we are all agreed (17)." It is the common agreement upon which we Christians stand, or kneel for that matter. The proof is our prayers.

This then, leads us to the next section.

[Questions]

“Are there any questions on this first section on God’s Sovereignty?”

III. Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility KEYWORD: Friends

The aim of this section is to think about the nature of the Christian evangelistic task in light of the presupposition that God is sovereign.

God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility are found side-by-side in the Bible. Man is a responsible moral agent, even though he is also divinely moved. Man is divinely moved, even though he is also a responsible moral agent. God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility are both realities. Consider Jesus’ words in John 6:37-40, **[turn in your Bibles]** *“³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

So, here is Jesus clearly stating, as we read in verse 37, that all that the Father sends Christ will come to Jesus. As we read earlier, in Ephesians and in Romans, it is clear that God has predestined some unto eternal life, and it is also clear that man must come to God. So, consider Jesus’ words in Mark 1, verse 15. “The time has come, he said. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.” So, we see Jesus’ understanding of divine sovereignty in John, and Man’s responsibility explained in Mark.

However, because the complex relationship between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility is difficult to understand, we tend to struggle with two temptations that can have negative consequences in our evangelism.

The first temptation is an exclusive concern with human responsibility. Man’s responsibility is a fact. And when man hears the gospel, he is responsible for the decision he makes. Similarly, we as Christians have a responsibility for making the gospel known. However, we

are only to concern ourselves with faithfully sharing the good news. When we ultimately concern ourselves with obtaining “results” in evangelism, we have misplaced our trust in God's sovereignty and have turned to trusting our own abilities.

This is the lesson we learned last week when we were looking at getting our job description right. The danger here is that evangelism becomes manipulative and brainwashing. We start becoming salesmen, in all the bad ways that word can conjure up. **[Example: Chapter 6 of *Soul Winning Made Easy*]**

This is a clear example of how one yields to an exclusive concern for human responsibility.

The second temptation that also threatens us is the temptation to have an exclusive concern with divine sovereignty. We do this when we allow an eagerness to show our trust in God's sovereignty to justify neglecting our responsibility to evangelize. This reasoning concludes that the most important thing to do is to make sure that we leave the initiative in God's hands. For example, two centuries ago, the chairman of the ministers' fraternal who stopped the founding of a missionary society which William Carey was seeking to start. “Sit down,” said the chairman, “when God is pleased to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine!” The mistake here is not taking the sovereignty of God seriously. This has been done. The mistake is not taking the Church's evangelistic responsibility with equal seriousness. It forgets that God's way of saving men is to send out His servants to tell them the gospel, as Romans 10 states.

The lesson for us is to avoid both extremes by making it our business to believe both these doctrines with all our might. Spurgeon, when asked how he could reconcile the two truths to each other, replied, “I wouldn't try. I never reconcile friends (35).” We have to grasp that divine sovereignty and human responsibility are not enemies but friends that work together. Thus, the keyword for this section: “Friends.”

[Question]

“Are there any questions or comments about this section of divine sovereignty and human responsibility?”

[Wait for at least one question or comment.]

Let’s move on to our next section, in which we’ll look at what evangelism should look like in terms of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

IV. Evangelism KEY WORD: Good News!

This next section is the longest in Packer’s book and it takes up about half of it. This section looks at Scripture to answer four questions. These are the four questions we’ve been looking at, and they arch over the whole Evangelism Core Seminar:

1. What is evangelism?
2. What is the evangelistic message?
3. What is the motive for evangelizing?
4. By what means and methods should evangelism be practiced?

1. *What is evangelism?*

We’ve looked at this the past two weeks, and Packer’s definition is in accord with the way we defined it previously. He asserts that the biblical answer to this question is very simple. According to the NT, evangelism is just preaching the gospel. It is a work of communication in which Christians make themselves mouthpieces for God’s message of mercy to sinners.

Evangelism occurs whenever you communicate the gospel with a view to conversion. What then, is the evangelistic message?

2. *What is the evangelistic message?*

This question is an important one, and gets to the heart of evangelism. Getting the answer to this question right will be the focus of the fourth and fifth sessions, where we study Will

Metzger's *Tell the Truth* and the *Two Ways to Live* gospel outline. All three sources, Metzger, Packer, and 2WTL, identify essentially the same components.

Packer identifies four essential ingredients. Think of them as the four cornerstones of the gospel. The four cornerstones are: God, Man, Christ, and Response. If you remember nothing else, remember these four components. When I am sharing the gospel, this is my "checklist," if you will. I do not consider myself as having shared the Gospel unless I have mentioned particular things about all four of these cornerstones.

a. First, the gospel is a message about God (58). God, as our Creator, has absolute claim on us. **[explain God]**

b. Secondly, the gospel is a message about Man and his sin. **[explain Man/sin/wrath]**

c. Thirdly, the gospel is a message about Christ. We want to particularly consider His works and His character. **[explain Christ]**

- i. Works: Miracles, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension
- ii. Character: Righteous: obedient to God, even to death

d. Fourthly, the gospel is a summon to faith and repentance. **[explain response]**

In our presentation of Christ's gospel, therefore, we need to lay stress on the cost of following Christ, and make sinners face it soberly. After looking at these first two questions, "What is evangelism?" and "What is the evangelistic message," Packer moves on to his third question for this section on evangelism.

3. What is the motive for evangelizing?

2 motives: 1) Love to God and concern for His glory and 2) love to man and concern for his welfare. These two motives should spur us to evangelize.

The first motive is primary and fundamental; the biblical rule of life is 'do all to the glory of God.' (1 Cor. 10:31) Men glorify God by obeying His commands and fulfilling His revealed will. (John 14:21, John 5:3). So, if we love God and are concerned to glorify Him, we must obey His command to evangelize. God is glorified when His mighty works of grace are known (73-5).

The second motive that should prompt us to evangelize is our love for our neighbors, and the desire to see those around us saved. God's love for us should give us a genuine love and concern for others.

Packer gives a stinging but honest rebuke (page 77) for all of those who don't have the desire to evangelize. It is a tragic and ugly thing when Christians lack the desire to evangelize. Evangelism is our great privilege! It is a wonderful thing to tell others about the love of Christ! If we are reluctant to share the gospel, we need to ask ourselves if we fear God or if we fear man. **[plug Ed Welch's *When People are Big and God is Small?*]**

We cannot forget that the enterprise required of us in evangelism is the enterprise of love. It springs from a genuine interest in those whom we desire to see saved, and a genuine care for their well-being.

4. *By what means and methods should evangelism be practiced?*

What is the key principle for evangelism? Evangelism is an act of communication with a view to conversion. There is only one *means* of evangelism: the gospel of Christ, explained and applied. "Faith comes through hearing the message, and the message is heard by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). It is Christ Himself who through the Holy Spirit enables His servants to explain the gospel truly and apply it powerfully and effectively. The principle for the best method of evangelism is the one that serves the gospel most completely. Therefore, we must ask questions that seek this principle out and test it.

5 Questions to test this principle

1. Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to impress on people that the gospel *is* a word from God?
2. Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to promote, or impede, the work of the word in men's *minds*?
3. Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey to people the *doctrine* of the gospel, and not just part of it, but the whole of it?
4. Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey to people the *application* of the gospel, and not just part of it, but the whole of it?
5. Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey gospel truth in a manner that is appropriately *serious*?

[Question]

Are there any questions on this section of Packer's book on *Evangelism*?

Remember then, the Key Word for this section: Good News!

V. Divine Sovereignty and Evangelism KEY WORD: Responsibility (God's and ours)

[Question]

How is our evangelism affected by the belief in the sovereignty of God? That is, how does God's sovereignty bear on our responsibility to evangelize?"

[Allow a couple of answers from the class.]

[Note: Packer answers with two propositions: it doesn't affect our duty and responsibility and (2) gives us our only hope of success in evangelism. To the extent that the class answers close to these answers, encourage them in their answers and move onto explain Packer's answer.]

I think the biblical answer may be stated in two propositions, one negative and one positive.

First, the negative proposition:

The sovereignty of God in grace does not affect anything that we have said about the nature and duty of evangelism. Let me give you four points that, I think, reinforce this first proposition:

1) The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the **necessity** of evangelism.

Read Romans 10:12 – 15. The idea here is that people must be told of Christ before they can trust Him, and they must trust Him before they can be saved. God's way of saving sinners is to bring them to faith through bringing them into contact with the gospel (97-8).

2) The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the **urgency** of evangelism.

"Whatever we may believe about election, the fact remains that men without Christ are lost, and going to hell" (98). We should not be held back by the thought that if they are not elect, they will not believe us, and our efforts to convert them will fail. The identity of those who are not elect – is one of God's secret things into which His people may not and should not pry (99).

3) The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the **genuineness** of the gospel invitations, or the truth of the gospel promises. Whatever we may believe about election, and, for that matter, about the extent of the atonement, the fact remains that God in the gospel really does offer Christ and promise justification and life to whoever wills. 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' (Romans 10:19). (100-04) **[Time permitting, Read Mat 11:28, John 3:16].**

4) The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the **responsibility of the sinner** for his reaction to the gospel. Whatever we may believe about election, the fact remains that a person who rejects Christ thereby becomes the cause of his/her own condemnation. The doctrine of divine sovereignty does not affect the situation in any way (104-05).

So that was our look at the first proposition stated negatively. Let's move on the second proposition stated positively.

The second proposition, stated positively, is that the sovereignty of God in salvation gives us our only hope of success in evangelism. “Were it not for the sovereign grace of God, evangelism would be the most futile and useless enterprise that the world has ever seen. Why is this? Finally, because of the spiritual inability of man in sin as we see laid out in Scripture (106)”. The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that, fallen man has a blinded mind, and so is unable to grasp spiritual truth. However clear and cogent we present the gospel, we have no hope of converting anyone (108-9).” It is the Lord who saves. Spirit gives birth to Spirit (John 3).

This gets back to what we were talking about in our first couple of classes when we discussed getting our job description right. When we get our job description wrong, we can get disillusioned and discouraged.

You and I cannot make sinners repent and believe in Christ; but God grants faith and repentance by His Holy Spirit. Paul uses the term God’s work of ‘calling.’ The author of the call is God; the mode of calling is by the gospel; and the issue of the call is a title to glory. “When we evangelize, our trust must be in God, who raises the dead and regenerates hearts. Meanwhile, our part is to be faithful in making the gospel known, sure that such labor will never be in vain. This is how the truth of the sovereignty of God’s grace bears upon evangelism.

What effect should this confidence and certainty have upon our attitude when we share the gospel?

3 things: Boldness, patience, and confidence.

- i. It should make us bold. Knowing that God will accomplish his purpose.
- ii. This confidence should make us patient. Where does this patience come from? From dwelling on the fact that God is sovereign in grace and that His word does not return to Him in void.
- iii. Third, this confidence should make us prayerful. In prayer we acknowledge that God is in control and we plead that he would be glorified

Finally, what is there to say about the idea that a hearty faith in the absolute sovereignty of God is inimical to evangelism? Not only does it under gird evangelism and uphold the evangelist by creating a hope of success that could not otherwise be entertained; it also teaches us to bind together preaching and prayer; and as it makes us bold and confident before men, so it makes us humble and persistent before God. We conclude therefore, that man will be able to evangelize better for believing in this principle of absolute sovereignty.

[Question]

Are there any questions on this section of Packer's book on Divine Sovereignty and *Evangelism*?

Any other questions?

Remember then, the Key Word for this section: Responsibility (God's and Ours)!

There you have it: an overview of Packer's book on Divine Sovereignty, Human Responsibility, and Evangelism: King, Friends, Good News, and Responsibility. May God use it for His glory in our lives.

[Pray]

God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are found side-by-side in the Bible (John 6:37-40; Mark 1:15).

- The gospel is a message about **Christ**.

Two Temptations:

1. We may be tempted to have an exclusive concern with human responsibility.
2. We may be tempted to have an exclusive concern with divine sovereignty.

- The gospel is a summons to **faith and repentance**.

3. *What is the motive for evangelism?*

4. *By what means and methods should evangelism be practiced?*

The key principle for evangelism is the gospel of Christ, explained and applied.

IV. Evangelism

KEYWORD: Good News

1. *What is evangelism?*

2. *What is the evangelistic message?*

- The gospel is a message about **God**.

V. Divine Sovereignty and Evangelism

KEYWORD: Responsibility (God's and ours)

First proposition: The sovereignty of God in grace does not influence anything that we have said about the nature and duty of evangelism.

- The gospel is a message about **Man and Sin**.

**Evangelism Core Seminar
Session 4: The Gospel Reduced
Teacher's Guide
September 25, 2005**

I. Introduction and Review

- **Welcome the class to the Evangelism Core Seminar**
- **Plug *Tell the Truth***
- **Read the verse below**

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" Romans 10:14-15

This verse makes it clear that we have been given the responsibility to be a mouthpiece for God. While we know that conversion is the work of God, God has ordained that receiving salvation comes from hearing the gospel message, which we as his followers are commanded to bring to others. Throughout the New Testament, Paul uses the term ambassador of Christ to describe his responsibility in sharing the gospel. Ambassadors are not simply to speak on their own behalf or on the behalf of just anyone. Rather, they are entrusted with a specific message to which they must be faithful. Likewise, if we are to be faithful to Christ, we must be faithful to His commandments, to His truth, and to His message.

The past three weeks have hopefully served as a good introduction to evangelism. Remember how we defined evangelism last week: "Evangelism is teaching sinners the truth of the gospel with a view to conversion." The next three classes will shift to a scriptural study of what constitutes the "whole gospel." The question we are seeking to answer over the next three classes is perhaps the most important question in our study of evangelism: "What is the Christian message?" Faithful evangelism requires that we understand the whole gospel and can communicate it clearly.

Sometimes it's easier to understand what something is by defining its opposite, so the purpose of today's class is to look at what the gospel is not. We want to walk out of here today understanding what we do not want to say and what principles and methods we do not want to use.

[Pray]

Let me give you a brief user's guide then for these next few classes. If you are a new Christian, or are unsure of exactly what constitutes the whole Gospel message, use this time to develop in your mind the words that you can use when you share the Gospel with others.

If you're an older Christian, confident of your ability to communicate the whole gospel, use this time to both sharpen your own gospel presentation and think about how you can disciple and teach others to communicate the whole gospel.

If you're a non-Christian, think about the main tenets of this gospel message upon which we Christians build our whole faith and see how they stand up next to your own understanding of who God is, who Man is, what type of person Jesus Christ was and what He came to earth to do, and finally, what response this requires.

[Question]

So, our question today is: "What is the Gospel message *not* about?" How would you answer that? What things out there in Christian culture are sold as evangelism but probably are not? What things do Christians spend a lot of time talking about that really isn't central to the gospel?

[Allow for a few answers]

Mack Stiles gives the following list in his book *Speaking of Jesus*:

- TV evangelists

- Evolution
- Family values
- Any of the various sins committed by Christians in the past
- Mistakes in the Bible
- Your personal testimony
- The New Age
- How a good God could do one thing or another
- Christian pop music
- Cults
- Predestination
- The religious right or left

Some of these things make for interesting discussions, and we should feel free to talk about them. It may be important to talk about some of these things to clear up objections to faith in Christ. But when someone asks what a real Christian believes, this stuff is off limits. We need to be ready to teach the core tenets of our faith. When you find yourself discussing these topics, ask yourself, "Does this clarify core Christian beliefs, or is this a fringe discussion?"

I assume it's clear that these things are obviously not the gospel message. Yet they tend to fill so much of the "evangelism" we see today. Why? Today, we're going to look at four common models of evangelism that we should avoid; these should help us understand why such "evangelism" exists today and how we can avoid it. The basic outline for these can be found in Will Metzger's *Tell the Truth*. Minor changes to their names have been made, simply for the purposes of this class. The four points are: 1. Packaging the Gospel, 2. The Partial Gospel, 3. The Method-centered gospel, and 4. The Man-centered gospel. In the process of evaluating these four approaches we'll contrast each one with a statement about faithful evangelism.

II. Packaging the Gospel

Packaging the gospel can be defined as *giving the minimum amount of truth to the maximum amount of people*. The idea is that if we can reduce the gospel to its bare bones for mass

distribution then we've done our job. The good part about this approach is that it's typically driven by an enthusiastic understanding of Christ's commandment to tell the whole world His message. How should we respond?

[Statement of Response] Faithful evangelism involves TEACHING the gospel.

[Do silent Evangecube demonstration]

Last week, we learned from J.I. Packer that "The gospel is of some complexity, needing to be learned before it can be lived and understood before it can be applied." We see in the book of Acts the apostles as teachers – reasoning, persuading, and explaining the Gospel– in order to communicate the truth.

In packaging the gospel, or reducing it to its bare bones, we can err in two primary ways:

1. First, we can assume that people understand the meaning of the gospel terms we use.
2. Secondly, we can ignore clear Biblical models of evangelism.

While we can use tools that summarize the gospel as a starting point, we should assume for the sake of our listeners that a more thorough, faithful explanation will be necessary. As Metzger puts it in *Tell the Truth*, "Each of the words associated with the gospel is like a tip of an iceberg rising above the water. Underneath is a large mass of assumptions and deep meanings. Only when we grapple with these can we understand our evangelistic task."

We should remember that *faithful evangelism involves teaching the gospel*. Biblical evangelism should be driven by biblical doctrine. Simply put, theology shapes methodology. Biblical evangelism focuses on God. Evangelism that packages the gospel does not. So what's the big difference? Metzger identifies three camps that are useful in this study, and they make up the outline for the rest of the class. "Packaging the Gospel" can be summarized in three ways: a truncated or partial gospel; a technique or method-centered gospel; and a self-help or man-centered gospel.

[Question]

Are there any comments or questions on this section?

III. Partial Gospel

J.I. Packer captured the crux of the problem when he said, "A half truth masquerading as a whole truth is an untruth." Fear of man or our own misunderstanding of the gospel can cause us to shortchange its message in order to be less offensive. In other words, we don't do justice to the whole gospel message, and in the process we undermine the truth people so desperately need to hear. In our post-modern culture, this is perhaps one of the greatest dangers to modern evangelism.

For instance, the fact that God loves sinners is a wonderful truth of the gospel. However, if the whole presentation of the gospel message rests on this truth, a dangerous distortion can develop. Sinners can relax with the thought of God's love for them and see no need for repentance. We see this easily misinterpreted by non-Christians in today's world with the idea that "God is love." A biblical truth becomes twisted into an excuse for complacency. Even in many churches, people would rather let the precious doctrines of the gospel be put on the backburner than create any divisions among people. For instance, a church near us here in DC advertises that it is "Inclusive, all lifestyles welcome. Will not judge." While we might not go to this extreme, we must not shield people from the natural offense that the whole gospel presents to those who don't believe.

How should we respond to this partial gospel message?

[Statement of Response] *Faithful evangelism involves the whole Gospel.*

A truncated gospel message can have tragic results. A lack of understanding the doctrines of the gospel can mislead the sinner and the saint in their duties. The sinner isn't sure of the proper response, and the saint isn't sure of the correct message. Many gospel tracts and

evangelistic training may be in error, and even if they are not, they may be lacking in their explanation of precisely who God is, who we are, what sin is, and what proper response is. Well-meaning Christians have adopted easy formulas leading to evangelism that is devoid of the Gospel message.

For those of us who believe all will be held accountable before God, let us fearfully look – without judging motives – at how God teaches us to proclaim His message. In love, we must tell others the whole truth about what it costs to follow Christ from the very beginning, trusting in the Holy Spirit to provide assurance and comfort to their insecurities and fears of following Christ. That is, we are to focus on our message rather than our method. This brings us to our next section.

I want to read an example of some evangelistic literature to help us see this point. It's entitled *Meet My Friend*. As I read, keep in mind the four cornerstones of the Gospel: God, Man, Christ, and Response. Relate how we defined them to the way they are presented in this piece of literature.

[Read *Tell the Truth*, p. 40]

[Question] How does this literature present:

- God? Loving / Not as creator, who has rightful claim on our life or Holy.
- Man and Sin? It doesn't / Not as rebellion against God deserving His judgment
- Jesus Christ? The giver of eternal life; Faithful; Friend; The Way; Loving – Not as the sacrifice for our sin.
- Man's Response? Should accept him as Savior and Friend / Not repent and believe. But then again, it doesn't really address sin in a way that would lead one to understand why repentance would be necessary.

If someone reads this tract, or we present the gospel to someone in this way, and they say, "Okay. I'll ask Jesus to be my savior and friend," is the person responding with a heart of repentance to the truth of the Gospel?

"A half-truth masquerading as a whole truth is an untruth." For the sake of God's glory and the person to whom we are witnessing, let's be upfront with and faithful to the whole gospel and what it costs to follow Christ. Let us not, in a desire to minimize the offense of the gospel, strip it of its life-changing truths.

[Question] Are there any comments or questions on this section?

IV. Method-Centered Gospel

What is method-centered evangelism? Method-centered evangelism is marked by a preoccupation with our ability to "get someone to make a decision for Christ." Singing many long songs coupled with long and urgent appeals at the end of an evangelistic service might be one example. Doctrine is often placed second to producing and reproducing a particular experience that will evoke a response from a non-believer. Whichever method is most successful at evoking a response is the method to use.

This type of evangelism rightly desires to see man respond positively to the gospel. However, as faithful evangelists, we should encourage only those responses that come from genuine repentance and faith.

[Statement of Response] Faithful evangelism seeks true conversions, which only the Holy Spirit can bring about.

One example of Method-centered evangelism that Metzger mentions is the "Try God" method. Apparently, there is a whole school of evangelistic thought that we should simply try God for a period of time to see how well He works for us; to see if He's not better than anything else we've ever tried.

This method asks people to try God out of curiosity to see whether He meets their perceived needs. The problem is that unless hearts have been convicted of sin, and people see their desperate need to repent and receive forgiveness, then God most likely will not “work” for them. We’re asking people to come to God on their terms not on His.

Knowing God is not like buying a car. You can’t just kick the tires and take Him for a spin. Our decision to follow Christ is the biggest decision we will ever make, and we are under a moral obligation to make it. By not following God we face real moral consequences, unlike the decision to buy a Toyota or a Ford.

So then, where exactly does method-centered evangelism fall apart? Method-centered evangelism errs in a fundamental way:

Method-centered evangelism tends to confuse our responsibility with God’s work. This confusion leads people to be very results-oriented and prone to measure their faithfulness in evangelism by the number of “decisions” for Christ they produce. As was made clear last week, conversion is the work of God, from beginning to end. It is Christ Himself who through His Holy Spirit opens men’s minds (Lk. 24:45) and hearts (Acts 16:14) to receive the gospel, and draws men savingly to Himself (Jn. 12:32). Let us be faithful in presenting the message to others clearly, without manipulation, and allow God to take that message to a person’s heart, changing it as only He can do.

Method-centered evangelism also tends to measure conversion by one-time decisions for Christ, and not by changed-lives. We should never assume that one-time decisions are always genuine and produced from true repentance. Scripture tells us that true conversion is accompanied by fruit in someone’s life over time. A good scripture to read on this topic is the parable of the four soils found in Luke 8.

Remember, we share the gospel with an eye toward true conversion, not a superficial, confused, or manipulated decision, but a life-changing transformation that only God can give.

Mark Dever, in his Nine Marks of a Healthy Church booklet, asserts that “the only true growth is the growth that comes from God.” (19) Therefore, “we should be more concerned to know and teach the gospel itself, than simply trying to teach people methods and strategies” (18). About his own evangelism, Mark gives three useful things that he wants to convey about the decision they must make about the Gospel:

1. First, the decision is costly, and therefore must be considered carefully. (Luke 9:62)
2. Second, the decision is urgent and therefore must be made. We are not promised tomorrow. (John 3:18, 36)
3. Third, the decision is worth it, and therefore should be made. (John 10:10)

[Question]

Are there any comments or questions on this section?

V. Man-centered evangelism

The last approach we’ll look at is man-centered evangelism. Many of the problems with modern approaches to evangelism can be attributed to the fact that man has replaced God as the focus of the gospel message. Most likely, we can see the fruit of man-centered evangelism to some extent in the approaches we’ve already looked at today.

While Man-centered evangelism employs the cornerstones of the gospel – God, Man, Christ, and Response, it defines them by man’s perceived needs. Therefore, the gospel can be tailor-made for each individual. For instance, if we’re witnessing to someone who’s just lost a loved one and is lonely, we present God as one who will provide needed companionship. Or if someone just doesn’t feel happy, then we present God as the one who can give him pleasant happy feelings.

Specifically, man-centered evangelism is characterized by several things. Let me give you three: a low theology, a high anthropology, and a low Christology:

1. Low theology – A low view of God. This manifests itself by showing love to be God's chief attribute...the best way to view God is as a friend, and that friendship is contingent upon man's choice.
2. High anthropology – A high view of man. This shows itself a couple of ways:
 - a. Low view of man's sin. He's not that bad. If you just give him the right information, he'll make the right decision.
 - b. Low view of man's basic need. He's incomplete. His primary needs are love, help, and friendship.
 - c. High view of man's ability. Man is viewed as morally able to please God.
3. Low Christology – A low view of Christ. Christ is perceived to save us from selfishness, mistakes, and hell. He exists primarily for our benefit.

Man-centered evangelism contains some biblical truths. Yet these are distorted, for errors come when truth is given out of context. **[Question]** What are some of the consequences of focusing on man in evangelism? Any ideas? **[Wait for at least 2 responses]**

Metzger identifies three consequences of focusing on man:

1. Deceiving non-Christians – unbelievers trust in their “response” for assurance.
2. Distorting Christians – believers look for another stage in their Christian life, often becoming disillusioned.
3. Disgracing God's honor – people professing salvation but reveal no evidence of repentance.

With its emphasis so clearly focused upon human beings, the Man-centered gospel can easily end up looking like many of the self-help books and manuals sold at Barnes & Noble. Man just needs to pull himself up by the spiritual bootstraps. Unfortunately, this type of evangelism is prevalent in evangelical circles.

Gary Johnson, the author of *Does Theology Still Matter*, cites a telling survey. 84% of respondents who claim the evangelical label embrace the notion that in salvation God helps

those who help themselves. 77% believe that human beings are basically good and that good people go to heaven regardless of their relationship with Christ, and more than half affirmed self-fulfillment as their first priority.

It seems to me that the prevailing notion today is justification by death. Upon our death, we are justified by the life we lived, and it must have been sufficient, because God is love.

So, how do we respond?

[Statement of Response] *Faithful evangelism seeks God's glory and tells men of their complete dependence upon God's grace for salvation.*

In thinking about man-centered evangelism, a couple of ironies become apparent. First, in trying to use the gospel to fill every type of human void or meet every type of need, such evangelism fails to tell of man's most basic need – the need of a savior.

There's a great quote by D.A. Carson in his book, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*. He writes, "If God had perceived that our greatest need was economic, he would have sent an economist. If he had perceived that our greatest need was entertainment, he would have sent a comedian or an artist. If God had perceived that our greatest need was political stability, he would have sent us a politician. If he had perceived that our greatest need was health, he would have sent us a doctor. But he perceived that our greatest need involved our sin, our alienation from him, our profound rebellion, our death; and he sent us a Savior."

The second irony is that man-centered evangelism prioritizes man's fulfillment but fails to tell others that true, lasting and complete fulfillment can only come from denying ourselves as we take up our cross in obedience to Christ. The gospel indeed fills our true spiritual needs. But ultimately, the gospel displays God's glory, not our own.

We gained redemption through a sovereign Savior, not a mere friend. Man-centered evangelism is not radical enough in its opposition to sinful human nature.

[Question]: Are there any questions about this last section?

VI. Conclusion

Well, we've look at types of evangelism we should be wary of and in so doing made four statements about what faithful evangelism is:

1. Faithful evangelism involves teaching the gospel.
2. Faithful evangelism requires sharing the whole gospel.
3. Faithful evangelism seeks true conversions, which only the Holy Spirit can bring about.
4. Faithful evangelism seeks God's glory and tells men of their utter dependence upon Him for salvation.

These are good statements to keep in mind as we faithfully tell others the good news of Christ. Next week we'll be taking a deeper look at the message of the Gospel and arming ourselves with the scripture necessary to be faithful stewards of the message he has graciously entrusted to us.

[Pray]

- Biblical evangelism focuses on God.

So what's the big difference?

III. Partial Gospel

- "A half-truth masquerading as a whole truth is an untruth."
- Example: "God is Love"

Statement: Faithful evangelism involves sharing the whole gospel.

- Christian Tract: *Meet My Friend*

IV. Method-Centered Gospel

What is method-centered evangelism?

Statement: Faithful evangelism seeks true conversions, which only the Holy Spirit can bring about.

Example: "Try God"

Three useful things to convey to a non-believer about the decision he must make (from *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*):

- First, the decision is costly (Luke 9:62)
- Second, the decision is urgent (John 3:18, 36)
- Third, the decision is worth it (John 10:10)

We evangelize with an eye towards true conversion, a life-changing transformation that only God can give – not a superficial, confused, or manipulated decision.

V. Man-Centered Evangelism

- Man-centered evangelism employs the four cornerstones of the gospel, but defines them by man's perceived needs.

Characteristics

1. *Low theology* – A low view of God.
2. *High anthropology* – A high view of man.

Session 4: The Gospel Reduced

What are some of the consequences of man-centered evangelism?

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Romans 10:14-15

Statement: *Faithful evangelism seeks God's glory and tells men of their utter dependence upon God's grace for salvation.*

I. Review and Introduction

VI. Conclusion

What does *faithful evangelism* entail?

1. Faithful evangelism involves teaching the gospel.
2. Faithful evangelism requires the whole gospel.
3. Faithful evangelism seeks true conversions.
4. Faithful evangelism seeks God's glory.

II. Packaging the Gospel

Statement: *Faithful evangelism involves teaching the gospel.*

- "The gospel is of some complexity, needing to be learned before it can be lived and understood before it can be applied." - J.I. Packer

Evangelism Core Seminar
Session 5: The Gospel Recovered: The Whole Gospel
Teacher's Guide
October 2, 2005

- **Welcome the class to the Evangelism Core Seminar**
- **Encourage them to continue to pray for each other in evangelism**
- **Begin the class by reading the verse above**

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to Scripture...

(1 Corinthians 15:1-3)

- **Pray**

I. Review & Introduction

In the last session, we looked at the Gospel reduced. Looking at styles, messages, and methods of evangelism, we covered the negative answer to the question, "What is our message?" By looking at what does not constitute faithful evangelism, we were finally able to make four positive statements about what does constitute faithful evangelism:

1. Faithful evangelism involves teaching the gospel.
2. Faithful evangelism requires the whole gospel.
3. Faithful evangelism seeks true conversions, which only the Holy Spirit can bring about.
4. Faithful evangelism seeks God's glory and tells men of their utter dependence upon Him for salvation.

Today's session and the next session will focus on answering the positive side of the question, "What is our message?" This is at the heart of evangelism. As we have discussed in previous classes, it is important that we have a clear understanding of the gospel, and that we can communicate it effectively and simply.

[Question]

To get us started on our task, let me begin by asking a question: What core beliefs do you all see as necessary in communicating when someone asks us, “*What do you as a Christian believe?*” What elements are required in this answer to communicate the whole gospel?

[Allow for substantive discussion]

In Tell the Truth, Will Metzger highlights four principles—God, Man, Christ, and Response—that can serve as excellent cornerstones to our solid understanding of the gospel message. These ideas are the foundation of the *Two Ways to Live* outline we will study as well. Today, we are going to explore the four cornerstones of the gospel message a little more in depth. These are the truths of the gospel that we should try, as the Lord gives us opportunities to share with non-believers. In one sense, if you walk away from this whole core seminar with nothing but these four cornerstones of the gospel – God, Man, Christ, and Response – I will be happy.

In my own life, they have been a wonderfully practical framework in my conversations to enable me in sharing the Gospel. Whether I have 60 seconds or 60 minutes, I use this to ensure that I've shared the Gospel. While I may be able to have good spiritual conversations, I will not have considered myself as having shared the Gospel with someone unless I have mentioned specific information each one of these cornerstones. Did I mention certain things about God? About Man and his sin? About Jesus Christ, His life and work? And about our necessary response, to repent and believe?

The goal of the class is to see how these truths fit together like pieces of the same puzzle. Without each piece, the puzzle is incomplete. In the back of our minds, we should be asking the question, “How does each cornerstone relate to every other?” In many ways this will be a very a basic lesson, but it's my prayer that we'll walk away from class with a better understanding of God's redemptive work, and, in turn, we'll be able to more effectively communicate that work to others.

Just a quick note on the handouts: Some key Scripture passages have been listed that may be helpful for each of these four points. It is always a great thing to use Scripture in your evangelism, both for your own personal study and when sharing with others. We won't be discussing the Scripture passages here today simply due to time constraints, but they're there for you to use on your own if you'd like.

II. God – The Sovereign and Personal Creator

1. Sovereign

2. Personal

The Sovereign Creator - We read in Genesis 1, the account of the creation story - In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth – the creation story unfolds until we get to verse 27, and find that God is also the sovereign creator of man. Genesis 2:7 says, "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."

As the sovereign creator he also sustains us. Again, we read in Genesis chapter 1:28, 29 "God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it..." "I give you every living seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it --- I give every green plant for food, and it was so."

God placed man in the garden and sustained him by giving him everything he needed. Implicit in the command he gave to Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the truth that God as creator and sustainer knows what is best for man and that man can only remain under God's perfect provision by trusting him for everything and obeying his commands.

Well, in considering that God not only creates but sustains his creation, what does this tell us about God? His goodness toward us; His care for us, His provision for us – all things we associate with love. In other words, *God create us and in his love he sustains us*. It is hard for me to think of a single display of love that is not associated in a personal way.

The Personal Creator – We know that God is not simply some impersonal force, and we know this because he speaks to us. All of creation starts with God forming something out of nothing, by speaking it all into existence. The very act of speaking implies personality; it implies the ability to communicate. But not only did God speak things into existence, but even more importantly, He speaks to us. To underscore the truth that God sustains us, we've already read Genesis 1:28, but that is also the first recorded time that God speaks to man. I think we see from the very beginning that God's relationship to us is fundamentally one of benevolence, love, and care.

I think that it is important to clarify here that in the Old Testament that God is presented and in the New Testament God is made visible in Christ as Colossians 1 states. For Christianity the defining point of God's personality is Christ. This is a point in which Christianity differs from many other religions in the world—in the fact that—Christians have a relationship with a personal God.

To sum up: First, God is a SOVEREIGN creator who sustains us. That is, out of His pleasure and freedom, God created and sustains us. Therefore, we are utterly dependent upon Him for everything we have. We have no inherited rights. God is light, purity, and holiness. He is creator of heaven and earth, and therefore He sets the standard of right and wrong. Because he is author he is ruler. Secondly, God is PERSONAL Creator. We are neither impersonal machines nor animals. Our significance is derived from our unique position of being made in the image of the God who is a person. God is love, and made us for the purpose of the communion with Him

– to worship, honor, fellowship with, and to delight in Him. He is God, the Father of us His creatures.

What does this all mean? **MAIN POINT:** God is our ruler. God has an absolute claim on our lives as our Sovereign and Personal Creator.

[Question]

Does anyone have any questions or comments about this first point/cornerstone of the Gospel?

1. Key verses: Psalm 100:3, Matthew 5:48, Genesis 2:7, Genesis 1:28-29
2. Key passages: Exodus 19:16-20; 20:1-26; Matthew 5:17-48

We are responsible to reflect God. God the King creates. Man the creature reflects. The question is do we reflect God? Do we reflect him as he perfectly is? I think the answer is clearly no, and so this leads us to the second cornerstone of the gospel.

III. Man – The Sinful Creature

- 1. What is sin?**
- 2. What sin does—what is the consequence of sin.**

We have just talked about God. How does sin relate?

The gospel challenges us with the question, “What is man?” How do we address the tension between man’s self sacrifice and selfishness? We must vividly show people the contrast of what they were meant to be, as seen in Genesis 2 and 3 (Creation and Fall) and what they have become instead (Romans 1:18-23).

We must guard against equating a guilty conscience with a spiritual conviction of sin. This was one of Packer’s main points that we studied in the third session. Conviction

sin includes an awareness of a wrong relationship with God, a sense of helplessness to do right, and a consequent need of a new heart. The Gospel makes no sense if this point on sin is missed.

Give an illustration: For example, a good friend I use to work with and regularly share the gospel with clearly understood a holy, creator God, and she understood right and wrong, but she didn't understand the depths of her sin and rebellion against God. Thus, we are never able to make much sense of why she needed a Savior to pay the debt of her sin. (Cristi) The same will be true for any non-Christian, from the most devout atheist to the most devout Muslim; their high anthropology, i.e., view of man and his nature, blind them from the true state of our depraved hearts and thus blind us to the grace of Jesus Christ: that he came to die for sinners like you and me.

So what should we do? We need to be spiritual doctors, and use the Scriptures (the Law, Sermon on the Mount) as a scalpel to expose the sinful character of sin – conviction of sin – AND reveal the compassionate Savior. People in spiritual poverty and darkness need to be lovingly shocked.

Key: Unbelievers must see themselves as guilty rebels under judgment and unable to save themselves. One of the best ways to communicate sin to another person is by providing them with a living example, use yourself as an example.

In the handout then, you will see some of the main points that we need to communicate about sin.

- We need to communicate what sin is. That is, we need to define it biblically. Sin is willful rebellion by refusing to do what God commands. It is determining to do what He forbids. What does it look like? We find ourselves:
 - a. Playing God: running our lives as if God did not matter; ignoring God; trying to be self-sufficient and self-made people.
 - b. Fighting God: violating and disregarding His Law for living; wanting to decide for ourselves what is right and wrong.

- c. **Illustration.** Allow me to give a biblical illustration. We read in Genesis 3 that Satan tempted man with the prospect that he could be like God, knowing good from evil. So the act of man eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was in its very essence, rebellion against God's design for man. Instead of man acknowledging God as his creator and trusting him as his sustainer, he wanted to be his own god, to rule over his life, to be dependent upon himself, to leave the protection that comes from dwelling in perfect obedience to God. The very nature of man's sin is rebellion against God.
- Hypothetical question: You're witnessing to someone and they say, "I'm not in rebellion against God. I'm not perfect, but I'm not consciously rebelling against God." Based upon what we know about sin, how are we to respond to that? Some biblical responses might help here, so we'll explore a few.
 - Romans 5:12, Romans 5:18 clearly state that sin entered the world through Adam's one sin, and that his sin made us all guilty of sin before God. We understand from these verses that Adam represented all of mankind. So all of Adam's offspring are guilty of his rebellion and continue it **by choice but also by nature**. Paul says in Ephesians 2, that we are dead in our trespasses and sins; by our very nature sinners and objects of God's wrath. So, it's not even if as if we need to consciously say to God, "God I hate you, I'm rebelling against your plan for my life." But rather, rebellion is simply a part of who we are by nature. Every sin we commit presently is not simply an isolated instance of rebellion; rather it is evidence of our rebellious nature. **We sin because we are by nature sinners.** In Romans 3 Paul quotes from Psalm 36:1, "There is no one righteous, not even one: There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away; they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

- We need to communicate what the consequences of sin are: physical death and spiritual death (i.e., separation from God). And both man's physical and spiritual death are due to God's judgment upon our sin, His wrath.
 - a. We see this death now in our lives in a "Living Death." This separation now from God results in such things as guilt, loss of identity, purposelessness, distorted relationships and so on.
 - b. We see this death in "Eternal Death" as well. This separation of our souls from God forever. Hell is real; it is as real as China.

Main Point: We are all self-deceived if we think we are living out of our own resources, when actually we are creatures and guilty rebels under judgment who cannot help ourselves. We have chosen to reject God. God's judgment is upon those who sin by trying to play God. Our sin separates us from God.

So in your mind, If you were talking with someone, and you got to this point were to leave it at these two statements – God demands punishment our sins and we can do nothing to avoid that punishment – what would conclusion would a non-believer draw? Complete hopelessness.

- **Illustration** – Francis Shaffer was asked once what he would tell a man he met on a train if he had only an hour to talk to him about the gospel. He replied, "I've said it over and over, I would spend 45-50 minutes on the negative, to really show him his dilemma---that he is morally dead---then I'd take 10-15 minutes to preach the gospel. I believe that much of our evangelistic and personal work today is not clear simply because we are too anxious to get to the answer without having a man realize the real cause of his sickness, which is true moral guilt (and not just psychological guilt feelings) in the presence of God (Metzger, 61)."

And this hopelessness can point us to only one thing: Jesus Christ – the merciful redeemer.

[Question]

Are there any questions or comments on this second cornerstone of the gospel, on Man and his sinful nature?

Key verses: Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:20; James 2:10, Psalm 36:1, Romans 6:23, Hebrews 2:11

Key passages: Isaiah 64:6-7; Romans 1:20-25; 3:10-20; 7:7-13; Philippians 3:4-6

IV. Christ – The Merciful Redeemer

- 1. Christ the Teacher**
- 2. Christ the Sin-bearer**
- 3. Christ the King**

We need regeneration – we need a new heart. Once we have helped people see the true nature of their sickness, there is only one cure. No other religion holds this radical view of sin, and therefore the salvation they offer is not as radical, nor is it as inviting.

In vividly presenting the whole gospel we must present the whole Christ, in all his roles. Let's turn to look at his role as teacher, sin-bearer, and King now.

Teacher: Christ's words and life reveal the nature and person of God. He communicates to our conscience, and we submit to His authority in Scripture.

Sin-bearer: He offered Himself as the innocent, substitutionary sacrifice for sin on behalf of all who acknowledge their sin. He took the guilt of sinners upon Himself and endured God's judgment for it in His death on the cross. He redeems them by His blood poured out, which satisfies the just anger of a Holy God against sinful people.

I cannot stress how important to understand that Christ took upon himself the judgment and penalty for the sins of all of those who would ever repent and believe in Him. He was the substitute, and his death was the payment. This is the theological concept

called substitutionary atonement, and without substitutionary atonement there is no gospel and there is no hope of heaven. This is so important that I want to say it again. Christ took upon himself the judgment and penalty for the sins of all of those who would ever repent and believe in Him. He was the substitute, and his death was the payment. On the cross Jesus took the debt we owed and paid it in full.

Not only did he bear our sin and pay our debt, but he rose from the dead.

As **King** He rose from the dead. He conquered sin and death and ascended back to the Father. His life of perfect obedience was vindicated at his resurrection and He freely and sovereignly gives His reward of righteousness to undeserving sinners. He dispenses grace, unmerited favor, to whomever He will and rules, in love, over all.

Main Point: Jesus as the God-man is the only way to life – by His life, death, and resurrection as Redeemer. We are forgiven because Christ on the cross bore God's judgment. God in Christ redeems sinful people. In his death on the cross, Christ became sin for man, in his resurrection, he conquered sin and death. His perfect life and his death for us are vindicated by his resurrection, and he, therefore, is our **reconciliation to God**. Romans 5:9-11, "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

Key verses: Isaiah 53:5; Mark 10:45; Ephesians 1:7, verses on handouts?

Key passages: Isaiah 53:1-11; 43:25; Mark 10:33-34, 45; Acts 2:22-24, 36

[Question]

Are there any questions or comments on this third cornerstone of the gospel, Jesus Christ, our merciful redeemer?

V. Our Necessary Response

- 1. Turn from our Sin**
- 2. Trust in Christ**

In establishing Christ as man's only hope for salvation and reconciliation to the God he was created to love and serve, it should then be fairly easy to move to the fourth and final cornerstone of the gospel - Our Necessary Response. An inherent part of the biblical gospel is the call to respond to this good news.

What does it mean to respond positively to the gospel?

On the basis of Christ's righteous, sinless life, his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, God invites and commands us now to repent of our sins and put our faith in God. Faith and repentance are both acts of the whole man, and through them we are finally declared righteous. This righteousness is not our own, it is Christ's, and furthermore through repentance and faith we are reconciled to God.

So the proper response to the gospel is to—

Turn from our rebellion to Christ as our Lord with our whole selves in our: minds, emotions, and wills.

- a. Minds: Agree with God that we have wronged Him and deserve His judgment. Realize that His goodness has been shown to us in many ways and that it is designed to humble us and bring us to repentance, that is turning from our sin.
- b. Emotions: Despise our sins and our sinful nature.
- c. Wills: Determine with the help of the Holy Spirit to turn from our rebellion and serve our Creator and Redeemer. Christ alone is the one who paid for our sin and can grant us power over our sin.
 - Turning from our sin is a fundamental change—picture a car taking a u-turn. We are to make a 180 degree—moving away from our sin and moving towards Christ.

Key verse: Isaiah 55:7

Key passage: Isaiah 12:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

We are not only to turn but we are also to Trust—

Trust in nothing that we can do, but only in the finished work of Christ as Savior with our: minds, emotions, and wills.

- a. Minds: Recognize Christ as the necessary and sufficient payment for sin.
- b. Emotions: Long for Christ and rejoice in His love for the undeserving.
- c. Wills: Commit our lives to Christ by casting ourselves upon Him as our only hope for reconciliation with God. Transfer our trust from ourselves to Him. Take for ourselves His gift of forgiveness and righteousness. Ask for God's mercy.

Main Point: A person can only become a Christian by turning from a sinful life to Christ and by trusting in Him as Savior and Lord. There is a cost to becoming a disciple of Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to turn from your sin and to trust in Christ. Justification represents a whole perspective of turning from our sin and trusting in God.

Key verse: John 1:12

Key passages: Romans 3:21-25; John 3:16-18

-Read Psalm 51:1-17; Isaiah 53:1-11; Galatians 2:20

[Questions]

Are there any questions or comments on this fourth cornerstone of the gospel, our necessary response?

With these 4 cornerstones - God, Man, Christ, Response – we can begin forming a picture of the true gospel message in our minds. As we paint this picture clearly for ourselves I think that we will be able to use it in our conversations with others.

Created on 10/2/2004 9:23 AM Revised on 10/1/2004

Next week's class will focus on learning the *2 Ways to Live gospel* outline. Specifically, it will be more of a training workshop where we as a class will have the opportunity to practice speaking and teaching *2 Ways to Live* to one another.

Pray

III. God – the Holy and Loving Creator

1. First, God is the SOVEREIGN and HOLY Creator

2. Second, God is PERSONAL Creator

Key verses: Psalm 100:3, Matthew 5:48, Genesis 2:7, Genesis 1:28-29
Key passages: Exodus 19:16-20; 20:1-26; Matthew 5:17-48; Isaiah 6

IV. Man – The Sinful Creature

1. We need to communicate what sin is and define it: willful rebellion against God.

2. We need to communicate what the consequences of sin are: physical death and spiritual death (i.e., separation from God).

Key verses: Psalms 36:1, Romans 6:23, Hebrews 2:11
Key passages: Isaiah 64:6-7; Romans 1:20-25; 3:10-20; 7:7-13; Philippians 3:4-6

V. Christ – The Merciful Redeemer

1. Teacher:

2. Sin-bearer:

3. King:

Key verses: Isaiah 53:5; Mark 10:45; Ephesians 1:7
Key passages: Isaiah 53:1-11; 43:25; Mark 10:33-34, 45; Acts 2:22-24, 36; Romans 3-6

God invites and commands us now to:

1. Turn from our rebellion to Christ as Lord with our whole selves in our:
 - a. Minds
 - b. Emotions
 - c. Wills

2. Trust in nothing that we can do, but only in the finished work of Christ as Savior with our:
 - a. Minds
 - b. Emotions
 - c. Wills

Key verse: Isaiah 55:7; John 1:12
Key passage: Isaiah 12:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

Session 5: The Gospel Recovered: The Whole Gospel

*Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to Scripture...
1 Corinthians 15:1-3*

I. Review & Introduction

II. Four Cornerstones of the Gospel

God

Man

Christ

Response