

## INTRODUCTION

We have been building this series around the apologetics pyramid.



In this study we are going to study the pinnacle of our pyramid ... the Gospel message itself. First and foremost, we must understand the power of the Gospel.

## THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

**Romans 1:16–17 (NKJV)** — **16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. **17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

The Gospel is what saves people ... living a godly life will not save people ... the Gospel will ... defending the faith will not save people ... the Gospel will! People need to hear a clear Gospel.

We only need to use apologetics when necessary ... i.e. when people have obstacles in their thinking that are holding them back from trusting Christ as Savior.

## DEFINING THE GOSPEL

If someone was to ask you to share the Gospel in under one minute, what would you say? Let’s look at Paul’s summary.

**1 Corinthians 15:1–4 (NKJV)** — **1** Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, **2** by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you— unless you believed in vain. **3** For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

The Gospel ... Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead! That is the heart of the Gospel. That is what people need to hear. You should be able to explain the Gospel in a nutshell ...

## PRESENTING THE GOSPEL

Let me share with you some of the key verses and illustrations that I like to use in sharing the Gospel with people.

### ***1. People need to understand they’re a sinner in need of a Savior***

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

ILL: Throwing a rock.

**Romans 6:23 (NKJV)** — **23** For the wages of sin is death ...

ILL: Wages.

## ***2. People need to understand that Christ died for their sins and rose from the dead ... that He was their substitute***

**Romans 5:8 (NKJV)** — **8** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**1 Peter 3:18 (NIV84)** — **18** For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

**2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV84)** — **21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**Isaiah 53:6**

ILL: Wallet illustration.

## ***3. People must understand that eternal life is a free gift that is received by faith***

**Romans 6:23 (NKJV)** — **23** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Ephesians 1:7 (NKJV)** — **7** In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

I love to use verses from the Gospel of John ...

**John 20:31 (NIV84)** — **31** But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

**John 1:12 (NKJV)** — **12** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

**John 3:16 (NKJV)** — **16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

**John 5:24 (NASB95)** — **24** “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

I love to use **Ephesians 2:8–10 (NKJV)** — **8** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, **9** not of works, lest anyone should boast. **10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

**1 John 5:11–13 (NIV84)** — **11** And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. **12** He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. **13** I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Make sure they understand that salvation is by grace alone ... through faith alone ... in Christ alone.

**John 14:6 (NKJV)** — **6** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

**Acts 4:12 (NIV84)** — **12** Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

### **Opening Diagnostic Questions**

1. *If you were to die tonight, do you know for sure you're going to heaven?*
2. *If you were to stand before God and He was to ask you, why should I let you into heaven, what would you say?*
3. *Has anyone ever taken a Bible and shown you how you can know for sure you're going to heaven? May I?*

### **Closing Invitation Question**

1. *Is there anything holding you back from placing your faith and trust in Christ as your only way to heaven?*
2. *If not, would you like to ask Him for His free gift of eternal life right now? I can help lead you in prayer if you would like.*

TIP: Have them read the verse(s). Ask them what they think the verse(s) means.

TIP: Use your testimony. Work the Gospel into your testimony.

## **DEFENDING THE GOSPEL**

So far we have talked about the Gospel message itself and how to present it. Now we are going to seek to answer some common questions and objections that people have to the Gospel.

**QUESTION # 1 – How can a loving God send ‘good’ people to hell?**

**QUESTION # 2 – What about those who never have opportunity to hear the Gospel? Is God just in sending them to hell?**

**QUESTON # 3 – What about infants and mentally handicapped people? Will they be judged by God in the same way as unbelievers?**

**QUESTIONS # 4 – How can Jesus be the only way? What about all the other religions in the world? Are you saying that sincere people who don't believe in Jesus are bound for hell?**

Someone wrote me a question for the series a while back ... “we know someone who says a loving God would not send ‘good’ people to hell. He is referring to people who work hard, pay their bills, are good to their families, etc. He says ‘if these people aren't ‘good enough’ for heaven, why doesn't God just snuff them out? How could he torture these people forever?”

**QUESTION # 1 – How can a loving God send ‘good’ people to hell?**

There are a number of truths that we need to understand in order to answer this question.

1. **God is not just a “loving God” ... He is also a “just God”.**

**Deuteronomy 32:4 (NKJV)** — **4** He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.

2. **God's standard is perfection, which none of us can obtain.**

**Matthew 5:48 (NKJV)** — **48** Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

**Romans 3:10–12 (NKJV)** — **10** As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; **11** There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. **12** They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.”

**Isaiah 64:6 (NIV84)** — **6** All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

**James 2:10 (NKJV)** — **10** For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

TIP: Use the law to demonstrate that even good people fall short of God's standard of perfection. Have they always loved God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength ... kept all of His commandments ... always loved their neighbor as themselves ... never lied ... never stolen ... never taken the name of God in vain ... never coveted anything ... never put anything before God (i.e. no idols) ...

**3. Because all sinned and God is just, all stand guilty/condemned before Him.**

**Romans 2:2–3 (NKJV)** — **2** But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. **3** And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

**Hebrews 9:27 (NKJV)** — **27** And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

**4. Christ's death demonstrates both the love of God and the justice of God.**

**Romans 5:8 (NKJV)** — **8** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**Romans 3:21–26 (NKJV)** — **21** But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, **22** even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25** whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, **26** to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

His death satisfied both His justice and His love.

**5. God provided a way for us to have His righteousness credited to our account.**

**2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV84)** — **21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

How do we have the righteousness of God credited to our account? By faith.

**Romans 4:1–8 (NKJV)** — **1** What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? **2** For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. **3** For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." **4** Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. **5** But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, **6** just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: **7** "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; **8** Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."

**6. If we could make it to heaven by being good, then Christ wouldn't have had to die and we would be able to boast.**

It would be up to us to be good enough. How would we know when we were good enough? We wouldn't have any assurance of salvation. Thankfully, God provided a way to be made right with Him that is not dependent on our "goodness" or lack of it.

**Ephesians 2:8–9 (NKJV)** — **8** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, **9** not of works, lest anyone should boast.

**7. “Good people” do not have to spend eternity in hell. They can choose Christ as their Savior.**

No one, including ‘good people’ have to be sent to hell ... God provided a way for everyone to be made right with Him.

God desires that everyone be saved, but they must put their faith/trust in Christ.

**2 Peter 3:9 (NIV84)** — **9** The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

**John 3:16 (NKJV)** — **16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

***QUESTION # 2 – What about those who never have opportunity to hear the Gospel? Is God just in sending them to hell?***

**Psalm 19:1–2 (NKJV)** — **1** The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. **2** Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.

**Romans 1:20–21 (NKJV)** — **20** For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, **21** because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

If they want to know the creator ... they seek Him ... they will find Him.

**ILL:** Muslims wanting to know the truth about Christ ... someone comes along and shares the Good News.

God is just ... He is perfect ... His just decisions will be made clear at the Great White Throne ... you don't want to be there to find out.

Using this as an excuse will not hold water when you're standing before God.

***QUESTON # 3 – What about infants and mentally handicapped people? Will they be judged by God in the same way as unbelievers?***

After the death of David's son ... **2 Samuel 12:22–23 (NKJV)** — **22** And he said, “While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?’ **23** But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”

I believe, based on these words of David, that the Lord will not hold people who cannot believe on Christ accountable ... abortion ... miscarriage ... death of an infant ... mentally handicapped ... etc.

Again, God is just! God's justice will be proved at the Great White Throne judgment.

***QUESTIONS # 4 – How can Jesus be the only way? What about all the other religions in the world? Are you saying that sincere people who don't believe in Jesus are bound for hell?***

This question takes us back to the topic of truth that we began with. They must see the correspondence view of truth.

Jesus did not leave any wiggle room.

**John 14:6 (NKJV)** — **6** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

**Acts 4:12 (NIV84)** — **12** Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

Sincerity does not save anyone.

**ILL:** I can sincerely believe that I will not be hurt if I jump off the Sears Tower in Chicago. However, my sincerity will not save me. The law of gravity is true whether or not I believe it.

We must come to God on His terms. There is overwhelming evidence that the Bible is God’s revelation to man. We need to find out what God says and come to Him as He has revealed Himself.

The person and work of Christ is the only person and work that can solve man’s sin problem.

Christ is at the center of Christianity like no other religion in the world. You can’t take Christ out of Christianity. You can’t just say that He was a good teacher and that we can accept only His teaching. Jesus didn’t leave us with that option. He was either a lunatic ... a liar from the pit of hell ... or Lord.

People have a responsibility to seek out truth. Believers have a responsibility to get the Gospel out to them ...

**Mark 16:15 (NKJV)** — **15** And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.