TELLING THE GOOD NEWS · STUDY NOTES

Study 1: What is evangelism?

For personal study or groups

Your name

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How to use these notes. Watch each part's video on biblehelp.net, or read the text below. Look up each passage in your own Bible and write the answer on the lines. The verses are printed at the back if you need them. At the end there are questions to think about on your own or to discuss in a group.

PART 1

Good news to be told

The gospel Paul preached (1 Corinthians 15:1–11)

Paul came to Corinth, a busy port city in Greece, earned his living making tents, and every week reasoned with people about Christ (Acts 18:1–4). A church began. Some years later, some in that church were saying that there is no resurrection of the dead. So Paul takes them back to the beginning: the gospel itself.

1. The gospel is the ground we stand on (15:1–2). Paul preached it, they received it, they stand firm in it, and by it they are saved. True faith perseveres: it is not enough to look back to a day long ago when we once believed. The question is whether we are still standing on it today.

1 **Read 1 Corinthians 15:1–2**

What four things does Paul say about the gospel?

2. The message is received and passed on (15:3). Paul did not invent the gospel. We are messengers, not inventors: we do not make the message more attractive by changing it, and we do not leave out the parts people dislike.

3. The message, phrase by phrase (15:3–4). *Christ*: the good news is about a person, God's promised King. *Died*: it is about something that happened, in history. *For our sins*: He died in the place of sinners. *According to the Scriptures*: God promised it long before (Isaiah 53:5–6). *He was buried*: He truly died. *He was raised on the third day*: He truly lives, and if He had not been raised, our faith would be futile (15:17, 20).

2 **Read 1 Corinthians 15:3–4**

Could you explain these four lines in your own words, simply, in a couple of minutes?

The cross and God's love

The Father did not need to be talked round. God did not start to love us because Christ died; Christ died because God loved us (Romans 5:8).

See also: Isaiah 53:5–6; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:17, 20.

4. The witnesses (15:5–8). On the first day alone, fifteen or twenty people saw the risen Lord; then more than five hundred at once, most of them still alive when Paul wrote, about twenty years later. The gospel rests on facts, seen by real people. That is why proclaiming it is called being a witness.

3 **Read 1 Corinthians 15:5–8**

Why does Paul add that most of the five hundred were "still living"?

5. Saved by grace, and kept working by grace (15:9–11). The man who set out to arrest Christians met the risen Christ (Acts 9:4–5). "By the grace of God I am what I am." The one who proclaims the gospel is himself a sinner saved by grace. And there is one gospel: "this is what we preach, and this is what you believed."

4 **Read 1 Corinthians 15:9–11**

How should Paul's words about himself shape the way we speak to others about Christ?

See also: Acts 9:1–6.

PART 2

Ambassadors for Christ

Why and how Paul speaks (2 Corinthians 5:10–21)

1. The fear of the Lord (5:10–11). Everyone will appear before the judgement seat of Christ. Knowing that, Paul tries to persuade people: he reasons, answers objections and pleads, honestly and without tricks.

5 **Read 2 Corinthians 5:10–11**

What is the difference between persuading someone and pressuring them?

2. The love of Christ (5:14–15). "Christ's love compels us." Christ died for His people, so that they would no longer live for themselves, but for Him. That is the deepest reason for proclaiming the gospel.

3. A new way of seeing people (5:16–17). Paul once judged Jesus by the world's standards, and saw only a failure on a cross. Now he no longer sizes people up by outward things. Becoming a Christian is a new creation, God's work, as great as the first light of creation (2 Corinthians 4:6). No one is too far gone for God to make new.

6 **Read 2 Corinthians 5:16–17**

Is there anyone you have quietly decided would never be interested in the gospel?

4. Reconciliation is God's work (5:18–19). Our sin has put us at odds with God (Isaiah 59:2), and God is in the right. Yet He made the first move, and came the whole way, without pretending that sin did not matter. He does not count the sins of His people against them, because they are counted against Christ.

7 **Read 2 Corinthians 5:18–19**

Who takes the first step to make peace, and what has He given to us?

5. Ambassadors who plead (5:20). An ambassador is sent, speaks for another, carries a message he did not write, and pleads on his King's behalf. God Himself pleads with sinners (Ezekiel 33:11; Isaiah 1:18), so we plead warmly, never coldly, and with everyone: "Be reconciled to God."

8 **Read 2 Corinthians 5:20**

What does it mean for us to speak "on behalf of Christ"?

See also: Ezekiel 33:11; Isaiah 1:18.

6. The great exchange (5:21). Christ was sinless (John 8:46; Hebrews 4:15). God made Him to be sin for us: He counted our sin as His, and treated Him as the guilty one. And in Him we become the righteousness of God. Our sin was put on His account; His righteousness is put on ours.

9 **Read 2 Corinthians 5:21**

How would you explain this verse to a friend, in simple words?

Made sin

God did not make Jesus commit a sin. He made Him to be sin: He bore the judgement our sins deserved.

PART 3

How will they hear?

Why the gospel must be proclaimed (Romans 10:1–17)

1. A heart that prays (10:1–4). Paul longed for his own people to be saved, and prayed for them, though many had tried to kill him. Before we speak to people about God, we speak to God about people. Israel was sincere, but sincerely wrong: trying to establish their own righteousness, they missed the righteousness God gives in Christ.

10 **Read Romans 10:1–4**

In what ways do people around you try to make themselves right with God?

2. Not "do and live", but "believe and live" (10:5–13). We do not have to climb into heaven or dig into the depths: Christ has come down, and Christ has risen. The word is near: confess Jesus as Lord, and believe that God raised Him. And the door is wide: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13, quoting Joel 2:32).

11 **Read Romans 10:8–13**

Why can we speak to anyone at all about Christ, whoever they are?

See also: Joel 2:32.

3. The chain (10:14–15). Sent, preach, hear, believe, call on Him, saved. It is not automatic: proclaiming Christ does not guarantee that someone will believe. But it is necessary: no one believes without hearing. Hearing includes reading: a Bible, a book, a letter, a conversation. God saved the young Spurgeon through an ordinary man and one verse: "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 45:22).

12 **Read Romans 10:14–15**

Calling on the Lord needs believing, believing needs hearing, hearing needs someone to preach, and preaching needs someone sent. Which part is ours?

4. Sent (10:15). Someone who is sent has a message given to him, an inner drive of love for people, and power from the Spirit. God chooses whom He will save, and He calls them through the words of His people. God saves; He is pleased to use us.

5. When people do not believe (10:16–17). Not all welcomed the good news, and God held out His hands "all day long" (10:21). People themselves are responsible for turning away. God does not call us to convert people. He calls us to proclaim the gospel to them, and to pray for them by name.

13 **Read Romans 10:16–17**

Where does faith come from?

See also: Romans 10:21; Isaiah 52:7.

THINK IT THROUGH

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Is there someone you pray for, longing for them to be saved, as Paul did?

2. Who first proclaimed the gospel to you? Thank God for them.

3. Where might you be "sent" this week: at home, at work, among your friends?

HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART

Memory verse for study 1

Learn this verse by heart this week. Cut out the card and keep it where you will see it.

TELLING THE GOOD NEWS · STUDY 1 · MEMORY VERSE

"Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: Be reconciled to God."

2 Corinthians 5:20

Berean Standard Bible · biblehelp.net

"I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You." (Psalm 119:11, BSB)

AT THE BACK

The Bible passages (BSB)

1 **1 Corinthians 15:1–2** *1Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, and in which you stand firm. 2By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

2 **1 Corinthians 15:3–4** *3For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,*

3 **1 Corinthians 15:5–8** *5and that He appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve. 6After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8And last of all He appeared to me also, as to one of untimely birth.*

4 **1 Corinthians 15:9–11** *9For I am the least of the apostles and am unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not in vain. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 11Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.*

5 **2 Corinthians 5:10–11** *10For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive his due for the things done in the body, whether good or bad. 11Therefore, since we know what it means to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is clear to God, and I hope it is clear to your conscience as well.*

6 **2 Corinthians 5:16–17** *16So from now on we regard no one according to the flesh. Although we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!*

7 **2 Corinthians 5:18–19** *18All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's trespasses against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

8 **2 Corinthians 5:20** *Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: Be reconciled to God.*

9 **2 Corinthians 5:21** *God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*

10 **Romans 10:1–4** *1Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is for their salvation. 2For I testify about them that they are zealous for God, but not on the basis of knowledge. 3Because they were ignorant of God's righteousness and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4For Christ is the end of the law, to bring righteousness to everyone who believes.*

11 **Romans 10:8–13** *8But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: 9that if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For with your heart you believe and are justified, and with your mouth you confess and are saved. 11It is just as the Scripture says: "Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame." 12For there is no difference between Jew and Greek: The same Lord is Lord of all, and gives richly to all who call on Him, 13for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

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

13 **Romans 10:16–17** *16But not all of them welcomed the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" 17Consequently, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

Scripture: Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain. Quotations keep its American spelling. Like many English Bibles, it often says 'man', 'he' or 'brothers' where it means people in general, men and women alike.

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Study 1: What is evangelism?

> **Memory verse:** “Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: Be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20). Say it together at the end, and ask who can say it without looking.

Aims

- See from 1 Corinthians 15:1–11 what the gospel is: the news of Christ, who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and was raised on the third day.
- See from 2 Corinthians 5:10–21 what kind of messengers we are: forgiven sinners, sent as Christ's ambassadors, pleading "Be reconciled to God".
- See from Romans 10:1–17 why the gospel must be proclaimed: faith comes by hearing the word of Christ.

Suggested timing (about 90 minutes)

- **5 min** Welcome and short prayer.
- **25 min** Part 1 video (15 min); 1 Corinthians 15:1–2, 3–4, 5–8, 9–11 and their questions.
- **25 min** Part 2 video (15 min); 2 Corinthians 5:10–11, 16–17, 18–19, 20, 21.
- **25 min** Part 3 video (13 min); Romans 10:1–4, 8–13, 14–15, 16–17.
- **10 min** Reflection questions and closing prayer, for the people the group is praying for.

For a shorter meeting, take one part each week.

Tips

- Keep the gospel itself at the centre: the four lines of 1 Corinthians 15:3–4. Ask each person to try putting them in their own words.
- Some may feel that they "could never do evangelism". Point to Paul's words about himself (15:9–10) and to the ordinary man God used to bring Spurgeon to Christ (Isaiah 45:22): proclaiming the gospel is passing on what we have received.
- On 15:2 ("believed in vain"), reassure the group: true faith perseveres, because God keeps it. The warning is against a faith that was never real.
- On 2 Corinthians 5:14 ("One died for all"), keep to the passage's point: Christ's love for His people compels us. There is no need to open other debates.
- Pressure and tricks have no place in evangelism (5:11), but pleading does (5:20). Help the group to see the difference.
- God saves; we proclaim (Romans 10:14–17). Some will not believe; that is not a sign that we have failed.

Answers to watch for

- **1 Corinthians 15:1–2:** Paul preached it; they received it; they stand firm in it; by it they are saved, if they hold firmly to it.
- **1 Corinthians 15:3–4:** Christ (God's promised King) died for our sins (in their place), according to the Scriptures (promised beforehand); He was buried (truly died) and raised on the third day (truly lives).
- **1 Corinthians 15:5–8:** so that anyone could check: there were living witnesses to ask.
- **1 Corinthians 15:9–11:** we speak as sinners saved by grace, not as good people looking down on others; one gospel for all.

- **2 Corinthians 5:10–11:** persuading reasons, answers objections and pleads, honestly; pressure manipulates.
- **2 Corinthians 5:16–17:** no one is too far gone for God to make new.
- **2 Corinthians 5:18–19:** God takes the first step; He has given us the message of reconciliation.
- **2 Corinthians 5:20:** we carry His message, not our own, and plead as He pleads.
- **2 Corinthians 5:21:** our sin was counted to Christ; His righteousness is counted to us.
- **Romans 10:1–4:** being good, religious or sincere; keeping the commandments; church-going and good causes.
- **Romans 10:8–13:** "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved": there is no difference between people.
- **Romans 10:14–15:** "how can they hear without someone to preach?": proclaiming the gospel to them is our link.
- **Romans 10:16–17:** faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.