

Connected to Christ



ADULT CONNECTION



CONNECT CLASS

APRIL 2017

THE STORY



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

There is a hymn that is titled “I Love To Tell The Story.” What is “The Story?” As the theme for April, it deals with the subject of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ or as that hymn sums it up “of Jesus and His Love.” Our prayer and goal through this month is that we gain a better understanding of the Story that will draw us closer and affect change in our lives for a more meaningful walk with the Lord. It is this Story that transforms lives.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that each teacher may have their own method for preparing to teach the lesson and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes him or her most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for each one’s own personal study and encouragement.

In closing the Apostle Paul desired a closer and more meaningful walk with our Lord and strove for that in his life. He exclaimed “That I may know Him...” Phil. 3:10. Do you know that Story? If you do know it, do you share it, invest in it, and live it? As we celebrate the resurrected Christ may each of us seek the Lord each day to know Him more.

-Blessings
Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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Know the Story

1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5

Focal Verse:

“For I determined not to know anything among you
except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

1 Corinthians 2:2

Introduce

The adventure began with a flip of a switch and then a loud buzzing sound as the water trickled down the drain at an almost imperceptible rate. Something was wrong with the garbage disposal. As a homeowner paying a mortgage, most of us try to solve problems on our own before calling a professional and spending big bucks. After letting the water drain, I attempted to fix the disposal myself by trial and error—not even having the faintest idea what I was doing. First, I grabbed a bottle of Drano and began pouring it down the drain to see if it would soften and dislodge the obstruction. Following the directions, this first experiment ended in failure. So I retrieved a flashlight and screwdriver from the garage to probe the top of the disposal to determine if grease had caused the blades to stick.



Despite freeing the blades after thirty minutes, the buzzing sound continued when the disposal was activated. As I pondered, the only course of action that remained was to disassemble the disposal and check the pipes and inner workings. An hour later, the pipes, fittings, and disposal lay strewn across the floor. So I took a screwdriver and again probed for the blockage. Finding none, I began reassembling the disposal and two hours later it was back under the sink, fortunately not leaking, and ready to be tested. With the flick of the switch to my horror the buzzing sound remained.

Introduce

At a loss, I decided to search YouTube for instructional videos to see what I hadn't yet discovered. The first video that I found explained how to take an Allen wrench and turn the crank at the bottom of the disposal back and forth until it freed the obstruction and could move smoothly and freely. After obtaining the right Allen wrench, I once again got under the sink and turned the crank—only about thirty seconds until it moved freely. I jumped up, turned on the switch, and the disposal worked immediately. I had engaged in a project that took half a day to resolve that if I had known what I was doing would have been only a couple of minutes. As Christians, sometimes we make the gospel more complicated than it really is because we don't understand its content. We engage in trial and error when seeking to understand the gospel when God has already outlined it clearly in His Word. The gospel message is simple and straightforward: Christ died for our sins—believe in Him, repent, and receive the gift of eternal life.

Key Question

Why do people make the gospel message so difficult to understand?

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

THE FOUNDATION OF WISDOM:

The church in Corinth, although multi-cultural, educated, and wealthy, had a multitude of problems because its members had a self-centered perspective that relied on their own perceived wisdom over God's wisdom. Their selfish attitude created divisions within the church and led to immorality that hindered both individual and corporate growth; therefore, in their own estimation, the Corinthians considered themselves wise and self-sufficient. Many in the Corinthian church did not have a proper foundation based on God's wisdom, but one doomed for failure by trusting in human wisdom.

When constructing a building, we must have a proper foundation or the structure will collapse. For the foundation, therefore, we must not only have the proper groundwork laid, but also the right ingredients. For

years, the freeways around our church have been under construction and we have watched soaring overpasses rise from barren prairie at the interchange between 35W and 820. Imagine if the contractor had not excavated properly or decided based on his own



wisdom to save money by reducing the amount of rebar, rocks, and sand in the concrete and increasing the volume of water. What would happen?

Although it may last a day or two, it would end in catastrophic failure and a total collapse of the freeway. In the same way, human wisdom apart from God will ultimately lead to failure.

What erroneous philosophies or practices do people attempt to build upon when discussing how to have eternal life?

Question
1

In the [first four chapters of Corinthians](#), Paul must correct their misunderstanding about the gospel and lay the foundation for successfully living according to God's plan. First, he reveals that the

message of the cross serves as the foundation of God's plan to reconcile a rebellious humanity unto Him ([v. 18](#)). Literally, Paul writes **the word** (logos) **of the cross** as a way of summarizing the message; he intends for us to see it collectively as God's complete plan for salvation from the crucifixion to the resurrection. Although Paul summarizes



the gospel by using the cross to represent the entire message, the crucifixion without the resurrection would have been powerless to transform and save ([1 Cor 15:13-19](#)). In addition, by using **word** Paul emphasizes the spoken proclamation of the gospel to underscore

the church's responsibility to engage the culture through evangelism—that is the telling of the story (which we will discuss next week). So when we communicate the **message of the cross**, we need to demonstrate the need for a perfect sacrifice to die in our place to pay the penalty of our sins as well as that the One who died in our place rose again as an example of the life that we will have when we accept the gift that He offers in a relationship with Him.

What is the message of the cross? How would you explain it to someone?

Question
2

Second, Paul outlines two responses to the **message** proclaimed. For those who reject it and **are perishing**, it is **foolishness**. The word Paul uses for **foolishness** has the connotation of insanity or madness. At face value by the world's standards, the **cross** looks like defeat rather than victory; ironically, the good news of the gospel appears to end in death. From the world's perspective, a "true" Savior would have accomplished the mission for which He was sent; He wouldn't have allowed Himself to be put to death on the cross. However, Jesus did accomplish the mission for which He was sent and the story doesn't end in defeat with the Messiah being buried in the grave. For those who have accepted it and **are being saved**, the **message of the cross is the power of God**. From God's Word, we know that sin requires the shedding of blood—death. For us to have life, a perfect sacrifice had to be offered. Jesus offered that sinless sacrifice and died for our sins, but the story doesn't end there. On the third day after His burial, Jesus rose from the grave in victory, displaying the power of God over sin and death which have been

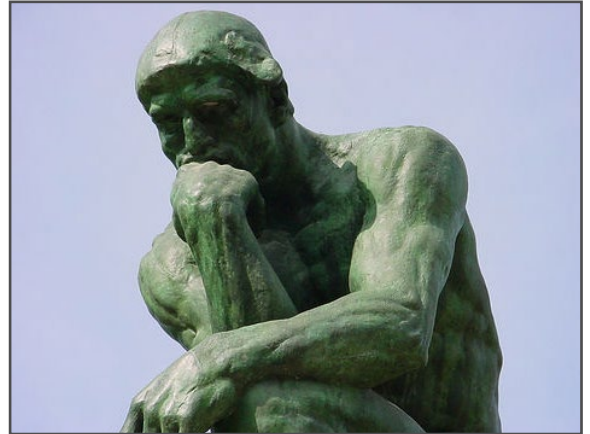
Instruct

permanently defeated (see [Rom 1:1-4](#)). To **those who are perishing**, it's asinine that a dead person would come back to life, but to us it's a testament to God's grace and faithfulness to give life through His Son.

In what ways is the message of the cross foolishness to people today who do not have a relationship with Jesus? In what ways can we respond to their accusations?

Question
3

Through His Son, God has provided a clear and accessible way to attain eternal life; in fact, it's the only way we can have life. The problem, however, is that humanity attempts to rely on its own **wisdom** and power rather than God's. To illustrate his point, Paul quotes [Isaiah 29:14](#) to



demonstrate how superior God's **wisdom** is in respect to man's for He **will destroy the wisdom of the wise** ([v. 19](#)). Through the prophets, God clearly spoke His plan to Israel, but they continually rejected it by mixing their worship of the Lord with the gods of the nations around them. Moreover, they even misunderstood the nature of the Messiah as one whom they thought would come to establish an earthly political kingdom favoring the Jewish people rather than establishing a spiritual kingdom which would seek to save all people from their sins.

In respect to God, Paul asks where are the **wise**, the educated (**scribes**), and the debaters who will stand and match wits with God ([v. 20](#)). The unstated answer is that no one in **this age** can even begin to compare to God's **wisdom**. In comparison to God's **wisdom**, the **wisdom of this world** is mere **foolishness**; hence, **the world** according to its own **wisdom did not know God** ([v. 21](#)). In [verse 25](#), Paul expresses the disparity even more clearly when he interjects that the **foolishness of**

God is wiser than men. Despite God's vastly superior knowledge, men still trust in their own wisdom to govern the course of their lives—whether it's through science, philosophy, or religious practices which ignore God's Word. Mankind through all its scientific and technological advancements seems to no longer need God because we have a grasp on how everything in the universe works. Yet, the complexity of the world and the limited understanding that we have only point to the need for a Creator and Savior because in reality we know very little. This becomes most evident in man's attempt to understand and reconcile life after death.

In response to God's wisdom, the **Jews** and **Gentiles** take two divergent stances. First, the **Jews** desire to test God by **requesting a sign** ([v. 22](#)).



*"A fool thinks himself to be wise, but a wise man knows himself to be a fool."
William Shakespeare from As You Like It, Act 5, Scene 1.*

Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, the Jews demanded signs ([Matt 12:38-39](#); [Luke 11:16](#); [John 2:18](#), [4:48](#), and [6:30](#)), but when Jesus performed numerous signs and wonders many people still refused to believe and even accused Him of being a demon filled with blasphemy ([Matt 12:24](#); [John 10:33](#)). Although God does grant people signs to validate the wisdom of His plan, Israel should not have tested Him with a vindictive spirit of doubt ([Deut 6:16](#)). Therefore, the **message of Christ crucified** became a **stumbling block**—that is it offended them because they could not comprehend God's plan for them. To hang upon a tree, in this case the **cross**, symbolized a curse upon that individual ([Deut 21:23](#)). The **Jews**, however, failed to understand that Jesus, who knew no sin, became a curse on our behalf ([Gal 3:13](#)). Therefore, they refused to recognize that Jesus came to die in their place for their sins; they sought life through works of the law which could only point out their failures rather than transform their lives into something that could please God.

In what way has the gospel become a stumbling block for people today?

Question
4

Second, as we have already discussed, the **cross is foolishness** unto the **Gentiles** ([v. 22](#)) who have rejected God's plan in favor of elevating human wisdom. In [Romans 1:22-23](#), Paul further explains their folly: "Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." The Gentiles, although

without excuse because God has clearly revealed Himself through the natural order, regarded man and his understanding as the center of the universe—much in the same way today that some try to use science to dismiss the clear evidence for God as the Creator. Yet, God, in contrast, overcomes these obstacles for both groups, **Jews** and **Gentiles**, through His **power** and His **wisdom** revealed through **Christ to those who are called** ([v. 24](#)).

In what ways can we use science and the natural order to demonstrate that God created the world and has a divine plan for it?

Question
5

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

THE FOLLY OF HUMAN WISDOM:

In this section, Paul describes in detail how and why God uses **the foolish things of the world** to offer salvation and bring Him glory. First, God knows our limitations as sinful human beings and how utterly powerless we are to save ourselves. After describing how weak we are with respect to God in [verse 25](#), Paul goes on to assert that no one is **wise, mighty, or noble according to the flesh** ([v. 26](#)); therefore, in terms of salvation, we have nothing to offer other than to trust in what Jesus has already done for us on the **cross**. For example, those who are **wise**

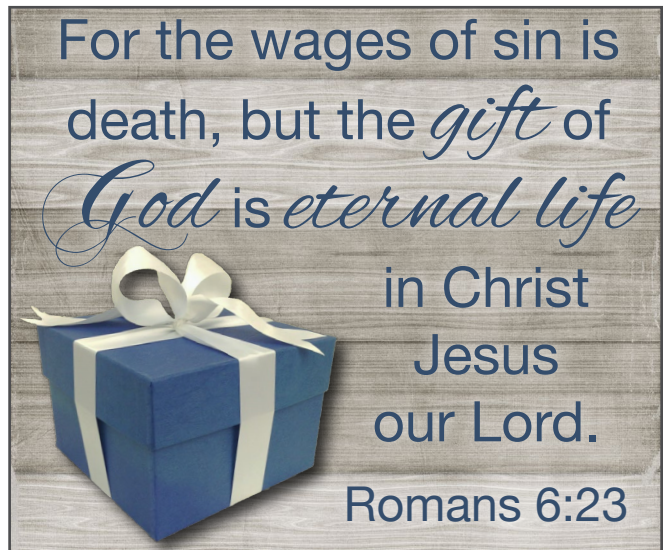


in their own estimation often misunderstand and misrepresent salvation which in actuality is simple enough for a child to understand and respond to it ([Mark 10:14-15](#); [2 Cor 1:12](#)). Similarly, those who are **mighty** or **noble** see themselves as self-sufficient—they don't need any help; they can obtain salvation based on their own merits.

Second, God knows the pridefulness of mankind which includes viewing himself as more intelligent and wise than he ought. Therefore, God realized that the plan for salvation should not only be simple to fathom, but also so miraculous that man could not take credit for it; hence, no flesh could **glory** in God's presence as self-sufficient and wise, boasting that he has saved himself ([v. 29](#)). Instead, God has taken the **base** and **despised**

things, that is death on the cross, to bring about salvation which is impossible for man to accomplish by himself ([v. 28](#)). Consequently, what makes salvation so difficult for man to understand is that God has already done everything and it's a gift freely offered to us without any strings attached.

Third, the **cross** demonstrates the power of God over life and death by bringing glory to the Father who has acted mercifully and graciously toward His wayward creation, loving us even though we have rebelled against Him. Because mankind can't save himself, **Christ Jesus became**



righteousness, sanctification, and redemption for us ([v. 30](#)). Stated simply, Jesus provides the way for us to have a relationship with the Father (**righteousness**) by purchasing us back from being enslaved to sin (**redemption**) so that we might live a holy and transformed life (**sanctification**). Through Jesus' death, God brings us into a right relationship with Him by canceling our sin debt and averting His wrath from us so that we might live in accordance with His holy will.

In what ways does the cross demonstrate the power of God in our lives?

Question
6

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

THE FOCUS OF THE MESSAGE:

The focus of our message should be a testimony about God; when we evangelize, we should use simple, everyday language in an understandable way that demonstrates what God has done for us. Paul notes that he **did not** engage the Corinthians with **excellence of speech** or philosophical debates, but he set forth the gospel in clear terms ([v. 1](#)). Paul is not saying that we shouldn't have a polished gospel presentation nor is he saying that we shouldn't engage in an educated conversation or debate, but that we should keep the right perspective. Too often when we engage in theological debates or philosophical arguments, we lose focus and discuss things that aren't important; therefore, Paul has **determined to know** only **Jesus Christ and Him crucified** ([v. 2](#)). The center of the gospel should always remain on the truth of what Jesus did for us on the **cross** so that the power of God can become evident to the hearer.

Instruct

Moreover, we must remember that we are merely messengers of the gospel; God can use us if we are humble, teachable, and faithful to communicate His Word. As successful as Paul was from a human perspective, he still realized his **weakness** in comparison with God and communicated the gospel with **fear** and **trembling** (v. 3). As God's commissioned instrument, Paul presented the truth and then allowed the **Spirit** to demonstrate the validity of the gospel and convict the person (v. 4). Our job is not to convict people of their sins or even present the gospel in terms of **persuasive** human rhetoric, but we are to present the truth in bold, yet plain, terms. Therefore, we must, at all costs, keep the message focused on the gospel and the completed work of salvation that Jesus performed through His sacrificial death on the cross.

In what ways does our failure to share the gospel demonstrate a lack of understanding of our role?

Question
7

Inspire

The message of the gospel is simple and straightforward, but its content is sometimes obscured by human philosophy and religion. Just as the problem with the garbage disposal in the introduction had a simple solution after watching an instructional video, the problem of sin which leads to death also has a simple solution found within the pages of the Bible. Man, in his own wisdom, attempts to deal with sin on his own,

but this usually leads to further problems as well as it complicates the solution. Modern man prides himself in being a critical thinker, but often his wisdom clouds the understanding of the gospel and skews his perspective about God.

Sometimes the simplicity of the gospel leaves man scratching his head—wondering, can it really be this easy? Because of the simplicity of the gospel and our personal relationship with Christ who guides us, we have no excuse for failing to share the good news about salvation with others: Man has a **problem**, which is sin. Because of His infinite love for us, God has a **plan**, which is Christ Jesus. Jesus died in our **place** and God raised Him from the dead as **proof** of the eternal life that we could have in Him. Our **plea** is to seek forgiveness by turning from our sins, trusting in Christ, and surrendering our lives completely to Him. Do you know the story? Have you responded to the story yourself? Do you share the story? Don't let fear and political correctness dictate to whom, how, and when you share the story, but be on mission for God by sharing the good news of salvation with everyone you meet.

In Prayer



Spend time praying that God will give you the boldness to share the story and ask Him for daily opportunities. When God gives you those daily opportunities, be faithful to respond.

Incorporate

How often do you tell the “story?” What prevents you from telling it more often?

What’s God’s role in helping you to share the story?

What elements of the “story” should be highlighted when sharing the gospel to people?

How can you explain the concepts of righteousness, redemption, repentance, and sanctification in plain language?

April 9, 2017



Tell the Story

Romans 10:1-15

Focal Verse:

“And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’”

Romans 10:15

Introduce

Every year as a church, we take mission trips to Brazil, East Africa, and other locations around the world. When we “go” on these mission trips, we see great things happen and hundreds often begin their relationships with Jesus because we are “on” mission and intentional about sharing the gospel. After returning home for those of us who have gone on these trips, we look around and wonder: “Why don’t we experience these same kinds of miraculous conversions as we do in Brazil or Kenya?” Dumbfounded, we typically blame it on the callousness of our culture and the difficulties we have getting people to stop and listen to the gospel presentation. We almost automatically dismiss sharing the gospel in public for fear of police intervention or the rejection of people who refuse to hear, so we keep silent and fail to tell others.

The reason that we don’t see God move in such a mighty way, however, is because generally we are not intentional about sharing the gospel; it’s not because our culture is completely hostile and opposed to the gospel—although it has become increasingly antagonistic. The prescription for seeing God move here in the US is simple: “Tell the Story.” The main reason we don’t share the gospel more frequently is not because we don’t know the story, but because we don’t make it a priority—we claim that we don’t have enough time or opportunity. The story, as we learned last week, is simple and



Introduce

straightforward, not convoluted and philosophical. For those of us who have a relationship with Jesus, we have an obligation to tell the story; Jesus didn't instruct His disciples to "go" on a two-week mission trip to fulfill their duty every year, but He commanded them to "be" on mission daily. In fact, He asserts, "While going, make disciples." This is the closest translation of the Greek that Matthew uses in recording Jesus' Great Commission to His disciples in [28:19](#). Although it may take on different forms in various venues, we are to tell the story in the workplace; we are to tell the story at school; we are to tell the story in the marketplace; we are to tell the story in our homes; we are to tell the story at social gatherings; we are to tell the story wherever we are and however God leads us. We should be as burdened as Paul was for Israel when he exclaims, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved." Let us desire to tell the story to everyone on our daily journey so that they too "may be saved."

Key Question

What keeps you from telling the story more frequently than you do?

DESIRE SALVATION FOR THE MISINFORMED:

Although much of his mission centered on the Gentiles to whom God had called him, Paul's burden for his own people, the Jews, never dwindled. Just as his ministry to the Gentiles was intentional, so also was his sharing of the gospel to the Jews for in each city on his missionary journey that had a synagogue he began there to reason with his fellow countrymen. Moreover, his **heart's desire** for his own people was borne through **prayer** and with all his passion he desperately wanted them to **be saved** ([v. 1](#)). Thus, Paul's ministry to proclaim the gospel to **Israel** began with an earnest plea through prayer for their salvation. Over our 150 years as a church, God has called us to participate in many great international partnerships, but how burdened are we for those in our own country, particularly our own city, who are without Christ? Paul prayed passionately for **Israel** and even wished that he "were accursed from Christ" so that his fellow "countrymen" would know the truth about Christ and respond to His offer of salvation ([Rom 9:1-5](#)). For many of us, a prayer for the salvation of our family, friends, and neighbors often comes as an afterthought; we tack on a generic phrase at the end of our prayers: "Oh, God, please save the lost." As God directs, we need to pray by name for those who don't have a relationship with Him; it shouldn't be an afterthought in our prayers, but rather it should be a motivation to be intentional about sharing the gospel right here in Fort Worth and Tarrant County.

In what ways does your burden for those who do not have a relationship with Christ show in your life?

Question
1

Before he indicts the Jews for their misunderstanding of the law, Paul praises their **zeal for God** (v. 2). Genuinely, the Jews tried to honor God through their adherence to the law and by following religious customs and rituals. Even though they are sincere in their beliefs and practices, Paul asserts that they are sincerely wrong and misinformed according to the truth of God's Word. Today, many religions, and even some so-called Christian denominations, have devoted people who live sincerely and faithfully, but their beliefs about salvation are wholly misinformed. Some cults, like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, teach that Jesus was an ordinary man who discovered the secret to overcoming the world by becoming divine which He then revealed to us so that we too can become divine. Denominations, such as the Roman Catholic Church and Seventh Day Adventists, teach that we can attain salvation through our good works. Still, other denominations, like the Church of Christ, believe that one must be baptized in order to be saved. Although many people



in these churches have zeal for their beliefs, they are sincerely wrong based on Scripture, just like the Jews that Paul confronted.

How do others who have been misinformed demonstrate misguided zeal for their beliefs?

Question
2

Consequently, Paul challenges the Jews' false **knowledge** about obtaining **righteousness** through the **law** as a method for salvation. Paul charges them with **being ignorant of God's righteousness**, thinking

that they can attain **righteousness** on their **own** ([v. 3](#)). In other words, the Jews wrongly believed that they could be saved by following the **law**. From the inception of the **law**, God intended it to accomplish two purposes: 1) point out the imperfection of man and his need for a Savior and 2) reflect the inward



change produced by a genuine relationship with God through outward practice. The **law**, therefore, was never a means by which people were saved, but rather it demonstrated the relationship they already had with God outwardly so that others could observe their transformed lives. Hence, God declares in [Hosea 6:6](#), "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (see also [1 Sam 15:22](#)).

The Jews, for the most part, had failed to see that **righteousness** comes from God alone and not through fulfillment of the **law** for no one, other than Christ, can realistically fulfill every part of the **law**. In [Romans 3](#), therefore, Paul went to great lengths to show that no one is righteous and all fall short of God's glory ([Rom 3:10, 23](#)). To do so, he quotes a number of Old Testament passages to substantiate his claims about the law ([Psalm 14:1-3](#); [53:1-3](#); [Eccl 7:20](#)). Therefore, a relationship with God produced obedience to the **law**—obedience to the **law** did not produce faith. For this reason in [verse 5](#), Paul quotes [Leviticus 18:5](#), **the man who does those things shall live by them**, to help his readers understand that no one could ever keep every command and statute of God perfectly; consequently, God in His grace sent one who could die in our place and offer His righteousness to us so that we may have life through Him.



In response to the Jewish misunderstanding, Paul declares that **Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes** ([v. 4](#)). The phrase **end of the law** has often been misinterpreted in the modern era. The **law** has not been rendered meaningless, annulled, or abolished for Jesus Himself said that He “did not come to destroy the law . . . but to fulfill” it ([Matt 5:17](#)). God's timeless principles that stand behind the **law**

are still valid today although the mode and method of expression of those principles may have changed with the time. As a result, Paul is not saying that law is outdated and obsolete here, but rather that the misunderstanding of the **law** has ended because Jesus has come to show us its true intention. The Jews, as well as modern mankind, should no longer see that obtaining righteousness comes from our own efforts, but it comes through the gracious gift of God through His Son Jesus. Just as the **law** was a gift to Israel to help them live a more abundant life and as a sign of an inward transformation expressed outwardly to the nations around them, so also is the **righteousness** given through Jesus Christ which leads us to live transformed lives today as a testament to the power of God's grace and mercy which has changed both Jew and Gentile completely.

What are some other misunderstandings or misconceptions that exist today that hinder people from knowing the truth about salvation in Jesus Christ?

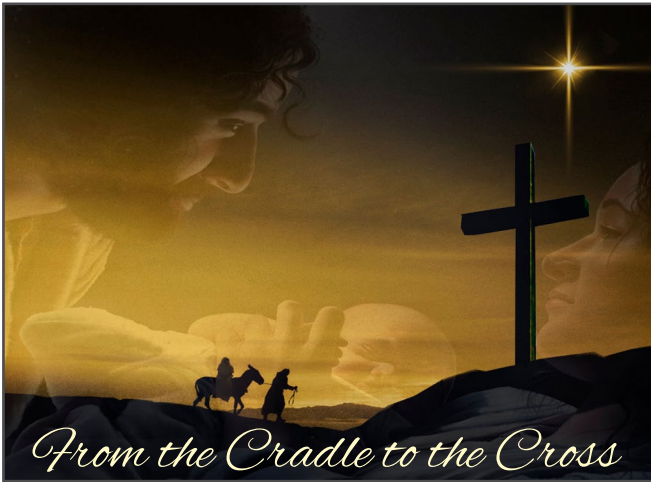
Question
3

Romans 10:6-10

DECLARE THE CORRECT METHOD OF SALVATION:

In [10:6-10](#), Paul continues to correct the erroneous understanding about **righteousness**. In [verse 6](#), he cites two examples from [Deuteronomy 9:4](#) and [30:12](#) to demonstrate that **righteousness** represents a gracious gift from God. The phrase **do not say in your heart** appears in [Deut 9:4](#) in reference to God's deliverance of the people from Egypt and their

subsequent possession of the Promised Land. This was a gracious act of God, not because they earned it based on their own **righteousness** and good deeds. The second part of the phrase **who will ascend into heaven** comes from [Deut 30:12](#). In its original context, Moses utilizes the phrase to highlight the simplicity and blessing of living obediently in God's grace because He has clearly revealed His plan to the people. In



Christ, God has also clearly revealed His plan of salvation to us, but Paul further qualifies it to demonstrate that no one has the power or ability to accomplish this feat on his or her own; salvation originates only with God. In His explanation to Nicodemus,

Jesus asserts, "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven" ([John 3:13](#)).

Specifically, to **ascend / bring down** in [verse 6](#) refers to the incarnation—that is the birth of Jesus. Through Jesus' virgin birth, God orchestrated everything in His divine plan, making salvation so simple. God sent His Son because He loves us and desires to have a relationship with us through His grace and mercy. We cannot earn salvation through any human means; it's a gift freely given by God. Similarly, to **descend / bring up** in [verse 7](#) refers the resurrection. On the third day, God raised His Son from the dead as an example of the type of resurrection that He

has promised those who have a relationship with Him. The gift of salvation was made complete upon the cross when Jesus shed His blood for our sins while the resurrection guaranteed that we could participate in the eternal life that God offered through His Son. Consequently, Paul uses these Old Testament illustrations in these verses to confirm that God's plan of salvation can be known by us because it's been clearly revealed through the cross and subsequent resurrection; therefore, we can have life in Him not because of what we ourselves have done, but because of what He has done on our behalf.

Why is it important to highlight God's divine role in the plan for salvation especially in reference to our sin?

Question
4

In contrast to the Jewish misunderstanding of salvation, Paul now explains the correct method ([v. 8](#)). Quoting from [Deuteronomy 30:14](#), he declares that **the word is near**; in other words, God has plainly revealed His plan of salvation to us which Paul will now reiterate in the next three verses. Salvation has two primary components that work in tandem: confession and correct belief. First, our belief must be centered upon the work of Jesus completed on the cross and validated through the resurrection. By **faith**, therefore, we must **believe that God raised Jesus from the dead** which in turn is the method which God has designated by grace to be the sole source of salvation ([v. 9](#)). Any other belief mixed with Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection detracts from the power and simplicity of the message and has no merit at all to save. Second, cognitively believing in the historicity of the resurrection without the

Instruct

the proper response also will not save. Consequently, we must **confess** with our **mouth** the **Lord Jesus** ([v. 9](#)). Through confession, we admit responsibility for our sins, ask for forgiveness, turn (repent) from our sinful ways, and give Jesus priority in our lives. Thus, both proper belief and confession **lead unto salvation** for with **the heart one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made** ([v. 10](#)).

How would you explain what it means to confess Jesus as Lord to someone who has no background in church?

Question
5

Romans 10:11-13

SHARE THE GOSPEL WITHOUT DISTINCTION:

In our world today, we often hear people cite the need to be inclusive and diverse—something which people generally don't apply to Christians. In reality, however, no other religion or way of life is as inclusive and diverse as Christianity. Twice within these verses Paul employs the pronoun **whoever**—that is anyone, regardless of their ethnic background, their cultural beliefs, or their social status, can be saved through a relationship with Jesus. Referring to [Isaiah 28:16](#), Paul



points out that **whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame** (v. 11). To this he adds [Joel 2:32](#) that **whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved** (v. 13). God does not differentiate between people and their ethnic or cultural heritage, but He loves them and offers salvation **without distinction to all who call upon Him** (v. 12). The gospel is available and applies to every person on earth. The world, however, often misunderstands inclusivity to mean that one is accepted how they are; therefore, they claim that we ought to embrace and tolerate their diversity even if it's sinful. Although the gospel is inclusive and God does accept people where they are, people cannot remain where they are and have a relationship with Him—they must experience transformation. Whoever experiences salvation will be transformed in their thoughts, words, and deeds to reflect the character of Christ who will expel all unrighteousness.

Why is it important to share with the world about the inclusivity of the gospel at the same time helping them to understand the gospel still requires transformation?

Question
6

Romans 10:14-15

DETERMINE TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL:

God has accomplished salvation through the death and resurrection of His Son, but we still have the responsibility to tell it to the world around us. Through a series of rhetorical questions, Paul places the onus of sharing the gospel squarely upon our shoulders. He asks, **“How shall**

they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? "We often mistakenly assume that everyone here in the US has had the opportunity to hear the gospel. There are people who live even within the shadow of our church building that have not heard the truth about Jesus Christ. People may be familiar with Jesus' name and they may even know what a few other people claim about the gospel, but many of them have never heard God speak directly from His Word because they have never opened its pages. We aren't taking a scripted message to people in an attempt to persuade them merely to attend church, but we are taking the very message of God so that they might have eternal life and not perish in their sins. For those of us who have a relationship with Jesus, we have the responsibility to be on mission daily for Him; we need to point people to God's Word and allow Him to speak to them through the gospel presentation. Every one of us has been **sent** to take the gospel to those whom we meet ([v. 15](#)). Do you share the gospel daily or have you let it slip down on your list of priorities to do only when it's convenient for you? God has called us both individually and collectively to be on mission where He has placed us; let us take seriously God's call and fulfill our responsibility as His foot-soldiers who carry the gospel boldly and visibly in all areas of our lives.

In what way can you and your Connect Class be more active in sharing the gospel right here in Fort Worth?

Question
7

When we are deeply burdened or passionate about something, it always shows in our lives. Passion not only affects what we say, but it also affects what we do. Undoubtedly, everyone who has a relationship with Christ knows that those who are perishing in sin need to hear and respond to the gospel. Probably every one of us would place a high priority on missions and evangelism. On Sundays, we may agree with a lesson or sermon on evangelism with a hearty “amen.” Yet, does our passion and consent translate into action? As a church, we need to act upon what we know to be the truth; we must be intentional about sharing the gospel daily.



Many of us may ask ourselves how we can be more intentional about sharing the gospel. It can be as simple as handing tracts and business cards with our church’s information to people with whom you have interaction at a store, restaurant, or any other public venue and inviting them to church. If you have time and people aren’t visibly in a hurry, it may be as simple as asking someone if they have anything for which you could pray. Most people won’t refuse prayer and it can help steer the conversation toward spiritual matters; people will generally still open up when someone shows genuine concern. Moreover, in our congregation we have many people who share the gospel and can mentor others.

Inspire

If you share the gospel frequently, find someone in the church whom you can mentor and take them with you; if you rarely share the gospel and have reservations, find someone who can mentor you. Be proactive in your search and take the initiative to seek others with whom you can partner. This will also provide the basis for having accountability. When we have accountability, we are often more encouraged to share our faith. To impact this world, we need everyone doing his or her part to fulfill what we have been commanded to do by making disciples in all the world.

Incorporate

How often do you share the gospel?

Daily	Never	Few Times per Week
Few Times Per Month		Few Times Per Year

If you don't share the gospel daily, what prevents you from doing so?
How can you be more effective in sharing your faith?

In what ways can our church more effectively help train you to share the gospel or present opportunities for you to share?

We must make sharing the gospel daily an urgent priority. Who in our church can be your accountability partner? What person in the church can you ask to go with you when you do share the gospel?

In Prayer



Spend time in prayer asking God for opportunities to share the gospel. Pray this pray earnestly and daily. Be ready to respond faithfully when God answers your prayer.

April 16, 2017



Live the Story

Ephesians 5:1-14

Focal Verse:

“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”

Ephesians 5:2

Introduce

Over the course of our lives, we all have idolized someone and perhaps have even tried to imitate them. For some it may have been a superstar athlete while for others it may have been a musician, actor, childhood hero, older sibling, or even one of our parents. As a child, I loved the thrill of adventure and the ecstasy of victory so naturally I wanted to be like my hero, Mr. T. Although I didn't have the ripped and tattered, sleeveless muscle shirts and vests like he did, I did have the authentic plastic jewelry and rings as well as the same bad attitude to match. When we imitate our heroes, we want to be like them in every way: how they talk, how they act, how they interact with others, how they dress, etc.



Only a fool says there ain't no God, [Psalm 14:1](#).

Just as Mr. T terrorized his enemies, I also terrorized and berated mine, namely my sister, through a verbal barrage of manly language—or so I thought at the time. Dressed in the plastic rings and jewelry from my toy chest, I imitated Mr. T from the scowl on my lips to the snarled look on my nose as I flared my nostrils to mimic his voice and expressions. “I pity the fool who touches my stuff,” I would yell at my sister. If she persisted, I would threaten with a gruff voice shouting, “That’s gonna be a ten on the T-meter for total pain if you don’t knock it off.” And, indeed, there was total pain—not for my sister, but for me as my parents applied the paddle to my posterior for menacing and punching my sister who persistently kept bothering my things.

Often, we will pick up bad habits, as I unfortunately had to learn the hard

Introduce

way, when we imitate other human beings, but there is One who is perfectly holy that we should strive to imitate. As Christians, Scripture clearly tells us that we should imitate God and be His ambassadors who represent Him with honor by the way that we live. In every area of life, we should seek to emulate our Lord and Savior just as He walked this earth to be an example for us. Therefore, in [Ephesians 5:2](#), Paul declares, “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”

Key Question

In what ways do you imitate God in your life and in what areas do you need improvement to be more like Him?

Ephesians 5:1-2

EMULATE GOD:

After describing the change in our behavior from our former lives without Christ to our new lives with Him ([Eph 4:17-32](#)), Paul issues a bold, and rather unusual, command that we should **be imitators of God** ([v. 1](#)). This exact phrase to **be imitators of God** occurs nowhere else in the Bible, but the idea finds expression when God gave the law to Moses. Because Israel should represent Him faithfully to the surrounding nations, God instructed Moses to declare unto the people: “You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy” ([Lev 19:2](#)). Not only should the people have God’s perspective or attitude, but they should also live according to His holy standards. Jesus also taught that His followers have an obligation to pattern their lives after their heavenly Father. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus asserts, “Therefore, you shall be perfect; just as your Father in heaven is perfect” ([Matt 5:28](#)). When Paul interjects that we ought to **be imitators of God**, he is citing a long line of tradition that expects us to live according to God’s higher moral standards rather than judging ourselves by the broken standards of the world.

In-Depth Information



When God formed man from the dust of the ground, He fashioned him according to His own “image” and “likeness” ([Gen 1:26](#)). Simply stated, being created in God’s “likeness” means that we were designed to have a relationship with Him—which man later severed through his disobedience. In contrast, being created in God’s “image” means

In-Depth Information—continued



that we were created to bear His personality and character to the rest of creation. Therefore, when Paul implores us to imitate God, he is referring to the purpose for which we have been created. As God’s stewards or caretakers, we are His ambassadors and should abide by His holy standards.



Living according to God’s standards is an impossible task without the Holy Spirit’s leadership; however, because the Spirit indwells us, we can attain these lofty standards if we submit to Him fully. We must remember that **as God’s dear children** we represent Him and our actions tend to reflect on His character—whether justified or not. **As children**, our behavior often causes people to judge our parents based upon the way

they perceived we were raised. A rebellious child, for instance, brings reproach and shame upon his family's name while a well-behaved child brings recognition and honor. In years gone-by, parents may have often warned their children as they left home to remember whose name they bore—"You're a Smith," they retorted, "Act with honor and integrity." Even if we haven't heard that statement, almost every one of us probably has encountered a rude, vulgar, or rebellious person in public and have made some type of comment about how they were raised—which ultimately reflects upon the parents. In the same way, our actions reflect upon God and we should seek to imitate Him so that we bring honor and glory to His name rather than reproach.



How do your actions reflect upon God?

Question
1

The command to **be imitators of God** is sandwiched between two specific examples of how we ought to display God's character in our lives. The first goes back to [4:32](#) where Paul urges them to "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." Hence, we ought to forgive others unconditionally and without reservation even if they do not apologize to us first. For example, Jesus **forgave** those mocking Him on the cross saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" ([Luke 23:34](#)). Consequently, forgiveness doesn't depend upon the response of other people, rather it

depends upon God's love made manifest through us which helps us to overcome animosity and bitterness in hopes of seeing conflict resolved and relationships restored. Second, Paul urges us to walk in **love as Christ also has loved us** ([v. 2](#)). We must **love** others sacrificially—not focusing upon the evil they have perpetrated, but rather the potential they have in Christ. Sacrificial **love** drives us to regard the needs of others as our own and seek to impart God's wisdom through His Word into their lives. Problems will abound, however, when we fail to have a Christ-like perspective; instead of building up others in the body, we tend to focus on the negative, offering criticism instead of encouragement. On the contrary, **love** leads to obedience which becomes manifest in acts of service through which God advances His kingdom and spreads His message.

What does sacrificial love and forgiveness look like in practice? What instances in your life have you either seen sacrificial love and forgiveness applied to you or you've applied it to others?

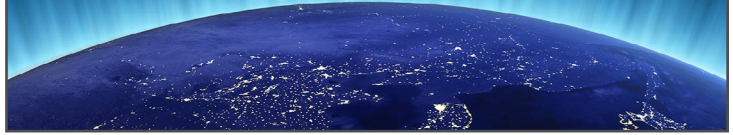
Question
2

God desires obedience and surrender over a multitude of religious rituals and activities; therefore, imitating Him with sincere motives becomes an **offering and sacrifice** that pleases Him ([v. 3](#)). In [Psalm 40:6-8](#), David announces, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire . . . I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart." We must remember that a **sacrifice** gives everything—including its very life. A **sacrifice** cannot by its very nature give part of its life for this would not fulfill the obligation to pay the debt in full. Instead, as a **sacrifice and offering** we must be wholly devoted unto God; therefore, we must live and act

righteously. We are not followers of Christ in name only, but our commitment to Him is borne through how we live and the way we represent His transformation in our lives to others.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:1



How does Paul's command to imitate God relate to Romans 12:1-2?

Question
3

Ephesians 5:3-6

EXPEL SIN FROM YOUR LIFE:

Contrasting the two positive qualities of **love** and forgiveness, Paul begins to list some of the areas which we ought to avoid. First, and most prominent, we must not participate in **fornication** ([v. 3](#)). From the Greek word Paul uses here, we get our modern word for pornography. The Greek includes any type of sexually immoral lifestyle: pre-marital relationships, extra-marital affairs, and homosexuality. Like those in Ephesus in the first century, our world is inundated with sexual deviancy fueled by the media and popularized by lax morals; therefore, we must diligently pray and watch so that we remain holy and don't become ensnared in any type of immorality.

In what ways can we prevent ourselves from succumbing to the temptation of sexual immorality?

Question
4

Instruct

Paul continues to explain that we must rid ourselves of **all uncleanness or covetousness**. Although some scholars attempt to tie all three of these concepts to sexual sins only, Paul's inclusion of **all** before **uncleanness** means that he has a much bigger picture in mind. The term **uncleanness** can also be translated impurity which encompasses sexual sins with a whole host of other sinful activities in which we participate. Since any type of sin makes us impure and unholy, we need to rid ourselves of any activity which will impugn our character and reflect badly upon Christ. In addition, Paul emphasizes that we must not participate in any kind of **covetousness**. To covet means to harbor feelings of greed and selfishness that when acted upon display a lack of contentment and self-control. Usually, we regard coveting in relation to material possessions and money, but it can occur among intangible qualities like honor, prestige, and power; hence, the term covet, like **uncleanness**, covers a broad spectrum of sin. None of these three areas, **fornication**, **uncleanness**, or **covetousness**, should **even be named among** us. Paul isn't referring to a mere discussion of the topic, but to our being labeled or branded with these sins because we participate in them.



In Nathaniel Hawthorne's [The Scarlet Letter](#), Hester Prynne was branded by society as an adulterer and forced to wear a letter A on her dress while in public. What effect does our sin have upon the way that we are viewed in both the church and society?

Question
5

Not only must we remain holy in our actions, but also in our thoughts and words. In [verse 4](#), Paul pleads with us to rid ourselves of **filthiness**, **foolish talking**, or **coarse jesting** (see also [Rom 1:24-33](#)). Much of these words deal with perverse thoughts and speech about sex. This includes sexual fantasy as stimulated by lust, explicit literature, and pornography. Almost every television program or commercial today has some type of sexual innuendo so much that we may not even think about how vile it is when we hear it. In addition, sexual conversations pervade the workplace and social gatherings whether in the form of dirty jokes or the discussion of private matters in a form of boasting. In order not to succumb to such widespread temptations, we must also rid our minds of these types of thoughts and treat the issue of sexual impropriety with the seriousness it deserves.

In [verses 5-6](#), Paul explains the consequences of remaining in a sinful lifestyle apart from Christ. No one who sins and does not have a relationship with Jesus **has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God**. By comparing and contrasting our transformed lives with those who aren't, Paul emphasizes that we shouldn't live in sin as those who have no relationship with Christ. Sin promises pleasure, but leads to destruction; therefore, Paul warns us not to return to our old habits being deceived by **empty words** which promise temporary joy and fun. Although we can't lose our salvation, sometimes we digress into our former habits; hence, Paul charges us to be careful of what we do, what we say, and what we think so that we reflect Christ instead of experiencing God's discipline in our lives as though we were **sons of disobedience**.

Ephesians 5:7-11a

ENGAGE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS:

After expelling sin from our lives, Paul encourages us **to walk as children of the light** ([v. 8](#)). Consequently, the first step of walking **in the light** means that we must **not be partakers** of the evil deeds of those who live in **darkness** ([v. 7](#)). The word Paul uses for partakers more aptly means partners. Most of us have heard the expression “partner in crime”—either in a positive or negative way; our expression “partner in crime” means that we are associated or connected with someone via a relationship. In

[Eph 5:7](#), Paul urges us not to be associated with the evil that these people undertake; in the previous section, Paul warned us not to be labeled or branded because we have fallen into sin and here he warns us not to associate with people who could tempt us to sin or even be viewed by others as guilty by association.



Instead, we should produce the **fruit of the Spirit** when we **walk in the light** ([v. 9](#)). Paul doesn't include a comprehensive list here, but he lists three general principles that should govern all areas of our lives: **goodness, righteousness, and truth** (see also [Gal 5:22-25](#)). In order to examine our lives properly, we must know the **truth**. The Spirit helps us to recall the principles that Jesus taught and to be able to apply them in our lives (see [John 14:26](#)). When we know the **truth**, we can discern that

which **is acceptable to the Lord** ([v. 10](#)). Therefore, we should participate in activities that display goodness ([Eph 2:10](#); [Col 1:10](#)) and those which maintain our righteousness or holiness ([Phil 1:11](#)) all the while avoiding participating in **the unfruitful works of darkness** ([v. 11](#)).

What are some activities that exhibit goodness and righteousness in which we should participate?

Question
6

Ephesians 5:11b-14

EXPOSE EVIL:

When we **walk in the light**, the transformed life which God has produced in us **exposes** the evil deeds of those who live in **darkness** ([v. 11](#)). At some point in our lives, most of us have probably dressed in a dimly lit room in the morning as we were getting ready for work, school, or an errand only to realize in the bright sunlight that we either have mismatched clothing or have some sort of stain that the dry cleaners or washing machine didn't remove. In dim light, we didn't notice the problem and continued dressing, but in the bright sunlight it became clearly **manifest** or apparent ([v. 13](#)). Most of us, if we had time, would have gone back inside to fix the problem. In life, when God **exposes** our blemishes in the **light** we need to ask Him to help us remedy them. Only when we fix our own problems first can we help illuminate and expose the problems in the world around us. However, we don't need to go around pointing out other people's faults as if we were the judge; we simply need to live our lives according to God's holy standards. Then God will work through the holy life which He has helped us to live to convict

Instruct

others and draw them into a relationship with Him. To help illustrate this point, Paul combines [Isa 26:19](#) and [60:1-2](#) highlighting the transformed lives which we now live in contrast to our former lives of disobedience. Paul asserts, “**Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead**” ([v. 14](#)). Having formerly been “dead in our sins and trespasses” ([Eph 2:1](#)), we have now been made alive in Christ to walk in a radically transformed lifestyle characterized by holiness ([Eph 2:5](#); [4:1-3](#)). We do not live this holy life by our own power, but because **Christ** has given us **light** by which we should shine in our lives. That transformed life, therefore, exposes sin and points others to the grace of Christ in our own lives.

In-Depth Information



The quotations from [Isa 26:19](#) and [60:1-2](#) are not about the final resurrection of believers who have died or gone to sleep, but they're about the new life we now live in Jesus Christ. Paul states this concept best in Rom 6:4-6: “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”

How does the light in our lives expose sin? Why does this not excuse us from sharing the gospel?

Question
7

As a Christian, I no longer desire to imitate Mr. T, but I long to imitate my Savior to bring honor and glory to His name as His child. Even though I sometimes still sin and have that bad attitude and worldly perspective, I seek forgiveness and try to learn from my mistakes—not living in continual sin and disgrace, but living by God’s grace and mercy. From time to time, we all succumb to our old fleshly desires for which we need to repent, but our mission should be to allow the Holy Spirit to direct our paths according to God’s holy standards.

How can we imitate God and live according to His standards so that others may be drawn to Him? First, we must realize how much we depend upon God for our strength and we must seek Him daily through prayer and Bible study. If we don’t have a regular relationship with Him, how will we know how to imitate Him? To imitate a person properly, we must be around them enough to notice their habits and observe their character; we can’t imitate someone we only know casually. Second, we must surrender full control of our lives to Him; we must allow the Spirit to guide our steps, dictate our actions, motivate our thoughts, and convict and correct our failures. The Holy Spirit, who knows the mind of God, will then be able to help us imitate Him and abide by His standards. Finally, we need to surround ourselves with people who will disciple us, encourage us, and hold us accountable in a world inundated with temptation. When we do these things, God will work in our lives and produce the fruit of the Spirit which imitates His character in goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Incorporate

As you pray, ask God to show you ways in which you need to imitate His love and forgiveness on a daily basis. List tangible ways that you can demonstrate these characteristics and then act upon what God reveals.

Why is it important to have an accountability partner (male/male, female/female) with both addiction and lax morals so rampant in our society? How would an accountability partner benefit you and how would you benefit them? In prayer, ask God to show you a friend who would hold you accountable if you do not already have such a relationship.

How can you influence our community by bearing fruit of the Spirit?
List tangible ways that you can impact Fort Worth and beyond through the goodness and righteousness that God has instilled within your life because of your relationship with Him.

April 23, 2017



Invest in the Story

1 Corinthians 9:16-27

Focal Verse:

"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more."

1 Corinthians 9:19

Introduce

Most of us, if we haven't already, will make some type of significant investment in our lives. In fact, buying a home represents one of the most monumental financial investments that most of us will ever make. Not only do investments require responsibility on our part, but they also provide rewards and benefits. As a homeowner, we have many obligations if we want to make the most of our investment—and boy does it require work and dedication! For example, to maintain the value of our home we must keep it clean, perform routine maintenance, and repair any structural issues that may arise. In addition to the regular maintenance, to increase the value of our home we must continually assess potential areas for improvement—whether in the yard, to the structure, or by adding energy-saving appliances and features. Not only do we need to maintain the property physically, but we are also responsible for paying the taxes, the mortgage if we have one, and insurance premiums to protect against any catastrophic damages. Along with the responsibilities, however, come the benefits and rewards. Once we pay the balance of our loan, the home becomes ours fully; whereas when we rent, we ultimately have nothing to show for the thousands of dollars that we spent because it went into someone else's pocket rather than being reinvested in our own home. Aside from the tangible financial investment should we choose ever to sell it, we also experience a sense



Introduce

of joy because it's our home. Because of our hard work, we take pride in the way that it looks and we rejoice in being able to use it to host our family and friends.

In the same way, investing in the gospel requires responsibility and dedication while at the same time offering intangible rewards for those who actively engage in it. To make the most of our investment in the gospel, we must continually mature in how we live in Christ, how we use our spiritual gifts, and how we share the gospel with others. Investing in the gospel requires complete surrender of our lives to Christ so that we have the discipline and self-control to remain focused on the main goal of a disciple—leading people into a relationship with Christ. In [1 Corinthians 9:19](#), Paul exclaims, “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more.” When we have this focus and we see lives changed, we will experience joy and elation in ministry and our reward will be the glorification of God through the people that He has saved through the ministry in which He has granted us to participate.

Key
Question

In what ways should we invest in the story (i.e. the gospel)?

1 Corinthians 9:16-18

THE REWARD FOR SHARING THE GOSPEL:

To understand our passage, we must examine it within its larger context in which Paul addresses the problem that some Corinthians have with eating meat sacrificed to idols. Because we as Christians know that there is only one God and the meat sacrificed to idols has no power, we can eat it freely if our conscience allows; however, if it causes someone to stumble and revert to their pagan practices or it hinders the spread of the gospel we should abstain from eating it ([1 Cor 8:1-13](#)). He intertwines this issue with the fact that vocational ministers deserve to be paid for their work ([1 Cor 9:3-14](#)), even though he pays his own way so that no one thinks he has control over him or that he owes them something; this allows Paul to focus upon ministry rather than the politics within the body of Christ. Because Paul receives no finances from anyone in Corinth, he can adjudicate this dispute about eating sacrificial meat fairly.

In [verses 16-18](#), Paul compares and contrasts preaching **the gospel** voluntarily and by compulsion; in reality, there is a tension within Paul's ministry because God has divinely called him to **preach** by compulsion, but because of his changed perspective it's something he also does voluntarily. Because Paul ministers out of **necessity**, he has nothing about which he can **boast** ([v. 16](#)). Paul cannot **boast** in himself, but he can only **boast** in what God has accomplished through him. In fact, if he were to fail to **preach the gospel**, it would cause him great anguish for he exclaims **woe is me** ([v. 16](#)). The phrase **woe is me** doesn't denote self-pity or that he will experience some kind of punishment from God, but

rather it demonstrates that he has a burden or deep desire to see people saved and he is compelled by God to do something about it.

How burdened are you for proclaiming the gospel to the lost? What are you doing about that burden?

Question
1

When we do something **willingly**, we often receive a **reward** for a job well done but if we do something **against** our **will** we have been **entrusted with a stewardship** ([v. 17](#)). The image of a steward that Paul incorporates here is one of a slave; the slave works for his master without compensation, but receives **charge** of his whole household and

possessions. Although he owns nothing, he manages the household with devotion as if it were his own. Because Paul feels compelled by God **to preach** to the Gentiles, he has become a steward of the gospel (see also [Eph 3:7](#)). Thus, as a steward, Paul



is held accountable by God for the faithful execution of his ministry. God doesn't hold Paul responsible for the results in terms of numbers because He is the One who produces the results, but He holds Paul accountable for his faithfulness to go and speak that which he has been given in the **gospel**.

Yet, since Paul also willingly participates in the ministry that God has

assigned him, he asks the rhetorical question: **What is my reward then?** (v. 18). He doesn't depend upon monetary or external rewards as motivation, but rather his reward is to be able to preach the **gospel** freely without any hindrance or suspicion by other people. Today, we encounter several televangelists and people in ministry who live lavish lifestyles at the expense of others rather than using the money for actual ministry—this isn't to discount that they deserve a salary as Paul has already explained in the larger context of [chapter 9](#). So when Paul says that he might **not abuse** his **authority in the gospel**, he refers to the perception by others if he continually emphasized the need for money or **rewards** and then lived an extravagant life. Instead, his motivation is intrinsic because of what God has done for him through Christ and what he sees God doing through the lives of other people whom He saves through Paul's ministry. Therefore, seeing others saved and being obedient to God's call on his life is his **reward**.

What is our reward for communicating the gospel?

Question
2

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

THE RESOLVE NEEDED TO SHARE THE GOSPEL:

In [verse 19](#), Paul, who is **free from** constraint because he receives money from no one, explains that he has voluntarily made himself **a servant to all** so that he may share the gospel more effectively. If indeed he is indebted to anyone, Paul owes Christ Jesus because of the sin debt He paid on the cross to redeem us. Nonetheless, just as Jesus **made** Himself **a servant to all** desiring everyone to have eternal life through Him, Paul

Instruct

also **made** himself a **servant** seeking to preach the gospel **to all** without distinction. Through his ministry, therefore, he aims to **win the more** by introducing people into a relationship with the Savior Jesus Christ. Thus, as a servant, Paul is compelled to share the gospel at all costs with a sense of urgency and conviction—not because he owes people anything, but because he owes Christ everything, including his very life.

Like Paul, we must resolve to share the gospel by putting aside all cultural and socio-economic differences as well as any personal preferences and beliefs. As a **Jew**, Paul followed the culture and cultic practices outlined under the **law** so that he could present the gospel freely without people focusing on his supposed violation. To the Gentile, **those without the law**, he overcame cultural differences that would prevent him from socially communicating with them for reasons of purity as well as that which would be offensive to them and cause them to refuse to hear the gospel. Paul doesn't use his freedom in the gospel as a license to sin nor does he participate in sinful activities in the name of evangelism, but he overcomes insignificant cultural barriers to present the gospel. For example, some cultures in India revere the cow as sacred and worship it. Although we know a cow is created and only points to the One who created it, we wouldn't make derisive comments about the bovine nor would we callously bite into a piece of beef in



the presence of an Indian friend who we invited for dinner. Instead, respecting their culture, while not worshiping the cow, we would establish a relationship with them to share the gospel and demonstrate how Christ alone can save and how only He is worthy of worship.

What examples of customs must we put aside in order to share the gospel? What are some customs that we cannot compromise when we share the gospel?

Question
3

So that men might hear the gospel and that **some may be saved**, Paul has **become all things to all men** ([v. 22](#)). He doesn't compromise his morals to bring the gospel to people (see [James 4:7](#)). If Paul lived today, he wouldn't go into the bawdy atmospheres of sports bars, use salty language, and get drunk so that he can witness to others who readily participate in that lifestyle; he would be viewed as a hypocrite and fake. Indeed, this would hurt his witness because he would be no different than any of the other people there. Instead, Paul would use sports or other hobbies that he has in common with people to engage them in a conversation rather than participating in activities that could cause temptation and ultimately lead to sin. Paul doesn't view his charge to share the gospel as one to please men, rather he sees it as a way to glorify God.

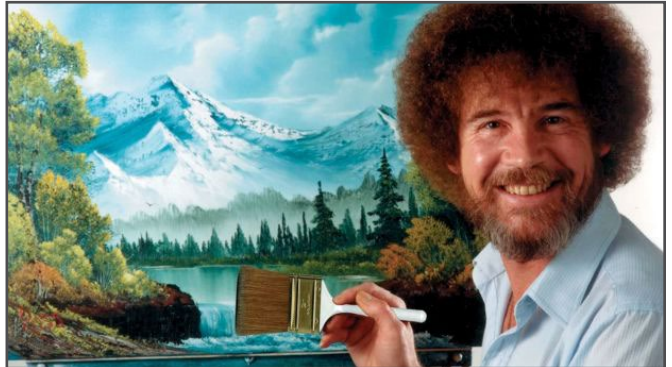
Why is it not only important to take the gospel to where people are, but protect ourselves from falling into temptation?

Question
4

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

RECOGNIZE IT REQUIRES DISCIPLINE:

In [verses 24-27](#), Paul uses two athletic metaphors to describe how we ought to invest our lives in the gospel. First, he poses a question about a **race**: everyone who enters the **race runs**, but only **one receives the prize**. Therefore, Paul urges us to **run in such a way that we may obtain the prize** ([v. 24](#)). Paul isn't saying that we can earn favor with God and attain prizes (or crowns) at the expense of others because of the good things that we do—this would be against the very nature of God who is no respecter of persons. Instead, he uses this metaphor to illustrate the focus that we must have on finishing the task to which we have been called, namely sharing the gospel. For example, how many of us have ever started a project only to abandoned it half-way through? As a fan of the late Bob Ross, I have always been intrigued by how he could take dabs of paint and turn them into a masterpiece because he could



envision the final version of the project in his mind. Although I have watched many of his shows, I could never finish a project because I would become distracted and unable to focus on the end result. Many of us also have similar problems because we become distracted and we don't finish what we've started because it's too hard, too time-consuming, or we have become bored. We cannot afford to let this

happen with the gospel; we must **run** the **race** with focus and finish just as strong as when we started.

What are some things that distract us from sharing the gospel?

Question # 5

Not only does a **race** require focus, but it also requires self-control for Paul notes that **everyone who competes is temperate in all things** (v. 25). **Temperate**, by its very definition, means self-controlled. In a **race**, a runner must exhibit self-control in every aspect: he must run at the proper speed so that he has endurance and does not collapse from fatigue, he must have the proper nutrition and amount of water before and during the **race**, and he must pay attention to how he runs the **race**, not how the others around him run—to name a few areas. In our lives in Christ, we must exercise self-control:

1) we must run the **race** with wisdom and endurance, working in the areas to which God has called us lest we burn out; 2) we must have a proper diet which nourishes us spiritually through Bible study, prayer, and fellowship with other



believers; and 3) we must pay attention to how we live our lives, that is our moral character, rather than worry about those around us.

What are some other areas in which we ought to exhibit self-control?

Question # 6

Paul continues to explain that those who **run** an earthly **race** do so to achieve a **perishable crown**, but we who invest in the gospel do so to

Instruct

inherit an **imperishable** one ([v. 25](#)). The **imperishable crown** that we inherit is the souls with whom God has allowed us to share the gospel and see saved. In [Phil 4:1](#), Paul calls the Philippians “my joy and crown” as they are a testimony to his faithfulness in sharing the gospel and the fruit of his labor. Consequently, the greatest **crown** that we could ever receive is leading someone to Christ and hearing on the last day: “Well done good and faithful servant” ([Matt 25:21](#)).

In-Depth Information



*In Corinth, the citizens held the Isthmian Games which were similar to the Olympics. For the prizes, they would receive crowns made from “plastered pine leaves.”**

Therefore, these crowns would literally fall apart as they aged—thus Paul’s reference to perishable.

**See Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000, p. 713.*



Next, Paul interjects that we must invest in the gospel with purpose and intention. When we **run**, we don’t run **with uncertainty**, but we know both the course and the goal ([v. 26](#)). He also uses the athletic metaphor of boxing as if one **fighters** by flailing his arms around aimlessly **in the air**. The boxer has no direction or purpose, but swings wildly as if



to hit his target by mere luck. When boxing, we have intentional moves, like an uppercut, right hook, or jab, designed strike a specific target. To strike the target, we must have a plan of attack as well as a familiarity with our opponent so that we know his tendencies. To invest in the gospel effectively, we must be intentional about sharing it and we must have a plan of action even before we begin the conversation. If we don't have a plan, often we will never get to the point where we share the gospel; we need to be flexible and adaptable, but we must still have a plan. In addition, we need to know our opponent to anticipate his objections and counter-arguments. Although we can never anticipate every objection, it still helps us to be proactive and intentional in sharing our faith.

How does having a plan help us to be able to share the gospel more frequently and easily?

Question
7

Finally, investing in the gospel requires training and **discipline** in how we live. A boxer, Paul contends, would train his **body** to exercise **discipline** or self-control ([v. 27](#)). As followers of Christ, we must live holy lives in accordance with God's boundaries so we can effectively share the gospel; consequently, we need to make sure that what we say and how we live matches what the Bible says. Living holy lives requires effort and training on our part; it's not something that automatically results because of our salvation. Because we remain in the flesh and have not yet been made perfect, we still have the propensity to sin and must train our bodies and minds not to succumb to temptation and to follow the pattern which Christ has established for us to live. If we continually sin

Instruct

and our actions don't match our words, then we have **disqualified** ourselves from sharing the gospel because people will view us as hypocrites and they will see the Word of God as ineffective; therefore, when Paul claims that he needs **discipline lest he be disqualified**, he's not talking about losing his salvation and being disqualified from inheriting eternal life. On the contrary, he's talking about not being able to present the gospel effectively because people see a disconnect between his actions and his testimony. It's imperative for us to exercise self-control in how we live so that we may have an impeccable testimony demonstrating the transformation that God has produced in us which He can also produce in others if only they would accept the gift offered through His Son.

How does living a sinful, undisciplined life affect our ability to share the gospel? Give some examples.

Question
8

In order to invest in the story (gospel), we must focus on the primary area to which God has called each one of us: sharing the gospel daily. Just like making an earthly investment, such as buying a house, ministry has certain requirements as well as rewards. To be effective in our ministry, we must surrender our lives completely so that we mature in Christ each day. Just as we maintain our homes by cleaning them, we must clean our lives with the help of Christ; therefore, we must rid our lives of anything that can hinder the spread of the gospel: sin, fear, pride, wrong motives, or laziness. Just as we make investments in our homes to improve its value, we need to invest in the lives of others intentionally by sharing the gospel. Pray and ask God to guide you to one person in whom you can invest. Be disciplined and intentional about investing in them and fulfill the responsibility that God has given you. You may need to overcome cultural and social differences to witness, but do not compromise the truth of the gospel. Remember that God hasn't sent you to change the person, but He's sent you share the truth of His Word in a loving way. God is the One who changes them and often this takes time. All God asks of us is that we are faithful, focused, and disciplined in sharing the gospel. Consequently, when we are obedient to God's call on our lives to make disciples, our reward will be joy in seeing people saved and growing in their faith—no earthly reward could ever top this joy that God gives.

Incorporate

To what ministry(ies) has God called you? How do you incorporate sharing the gospel in them?

In what ways can we as FBCFW overcome social and culture barriers to share the gospel without compromising its message?

What are some ideas God has given you for ministries that could impact our community with the gospel? Share them with the ministers by e-mailing info@fbcfw.org.

Since the Christian life is a life-long learning process, we must continually grow in maturity. In what areas in your life do you need to be more disciplined or focused? How can you, as you grow in your own walk, help disciple others?

April 30, 2017



Be Part of the Story

1 Timothy 4:9-16

Focal Verse:

"Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all."

1 Timothy 4:15

Introduce

In having been both a student and a professor, I've had the privilege of working with both traditional college students in their late teens and twenties as well as the non-traditional students who returned to get their degrees later in life. Other than the age difference and maturity level, the two qualities that separated these groups the most were their focus and dedication. Although there were several exceptional young adults—with the risk of generalizing—many of them faced way too many distractions and had little knowledge about the direction they were headed. Younger students were often blown off course by the tempest known as love; they



became easily distracted by the allure of the opposite gender. Instead of doing homework in a timely manner, the attraction of social media, the Internet, video games, and television caused procrastination. College hijinks and fellowship often led to late nights and a rush to finish assignments only to submit something of poor quality.

Non-traditional students also had obstacles, for many of them were married, some had children, and many had full-time jobs, but they typically produced the best work and learned the most from their instruction. So what's the difference? They were more devoted to their studies. They recognized the importance of education and they balanced their lives so that the obstacles didn't become a distraction. They didn't neglect the

Introduce

other areas of their lives, but rather they took steps to focus their goals on the things which were most important. With age comes wisdom, but the wisdom of God about how one becomes part of His story is available to all ages in every generation.

In our lesson this week, Paul is writing to his young protégé named Timothy whom he has dispatched to help resolve some doctrinal issues in the Ephesian church. Even as a youth, Timothy is encouraged by Paul to “be an example” in the way he lives and sound in what he teaches. Even though these two characteristics have great influence upon his ministry, the most important quality that Paul desires Timothy to display is devotion. For he writes, “Meditate on these things; **give yourself entirely to them**, that your progress may be evident to all.” Paul wants Timothy first to be devoted to his own personal spiritual development in Christ and then to his ministry within the local church. To be part of the story, we must give of ourselves wholly unto the Lord so that He can help us mature in our daily walk and use that spiritual growth in our lives to disciple others.

Key Question

In terms of your relationship with Christ, what does complete devotion look like?

1 Timothy 4:9-10

TRUST GOD:

To be part of God's story, we must first have a genuine relationship through Christ in which we have asked forgiveness and turned from our sins to submit obediently to Him. When Christ becomes the center of our lives, He transforms us from the inside out so that we mature in our walk to become more like Him (see [Eph 5:1-2](#)). Even though He has transformed

and saved us, we still struggle with our former desires; therefore, we must constantly devote ourselves to the study of God's Word which reminds us how we should live. For this reason, Paul has sent Timothy



to Ephesus not only to correct doctrinal errors, but also to remind them about God's holy expectations which should have become visible through their behavior.

The way that we behave reflects how much we **trust** God to guide us; thus, certain standards should characterize our lives as participants in His Kingdom. In [1 Timothy 4:6-8](#), Paul outlines three things that Timothy ought to remind the Ephesian church: 1) to base their lives upon **good**, or sound, **doctrine**, 2) to avoid contentious debates and useless speculation, and 3) to practice **godliness**. First, we need to have a solid foundation by knowing the content of God's Word because it provides explicit instructions about our behavior and attitude. If we have no clue what the Word of God says,

Instruct

then how will we be able to apply it in our lives daily? Second, when we base our lives upon **good doctrine**, it will become evident in how we talk and what we do; therefore, both our speech and our actions will mimic God's holiness ([1 Tim 4:7](#)).

What are some of the other characteristics that mark us as belonging to Christ? How do they differ from the world around us?

Question
1

Even today, we can observe that members of certain groups share similar experiences which influence how they speak, how they act, and how they look—differentiating them as insiders versus outsiders. For example, members of a sports team have different lingo, wear different uniforms, and behave differently based upon their experiences than members of a marching band. Those outside of the group, like the football player pictured, stick out because they are radically different from everyone else around them. As Christians, we are part of a group which has certain characteristics that mark us as belonging to Christ; however, they also mark us as outsiders to the world around us because they clearly differentiate us in terms of our holy behavior. It's not easy living a Christ-centered life when everyone else around us may seem happier living selfishly as they please; therefore, we must **labor** to follow



God's boundaries for our lives, but when we do it often causes us to **suffer reproach** at the hands of those who do not have a relationship with Christ ([v. 10](#)). Often as Christians, we will **suffer** ridicule for the way we live because righteousness exposes sin ([Eph 5:13](#)); because the world lives in sin, they either try to justify their lifestyles or mock those who behave properly to appease their consciences. Nonetheless, we must continue to work hard to live by God's standards and maintain our testimony in Christ.

Why does the world persecute those who reflect the character of Christ? How should we respond to them?

Question
2

Even if we suffer reproach by the world around us, we can still live a godly life because we serve a living God who is able to overcome our life in the flesh ([v. 10](#)). Only the Lord has the power to change through the salvation He offers; no self-help book, no ten-step program, no self-motivation, no accountability partner, or anything in this world has the power to change as thoroughly and permanently as God. Yet, the salvation and change that the Lord offers requires **trust** on our part. Although **God is the Savior of all men**—that is He sent His Son to die so that everyone may have eternal life—many fail to place their **trust** in Him and they reject the gift of salvation that He has given. However, why do some **believers**



live as though they don't **trust** God? They feel that they know what's best for their lives; they don't bother to pray or read Scripture and they often live lives that don't honor God—even though from time to time they may do some good things. To live as God expects, it requires complete **trust** in Him to orchestrate how we live from day to day.

How does the way that we live show how much we trust God?

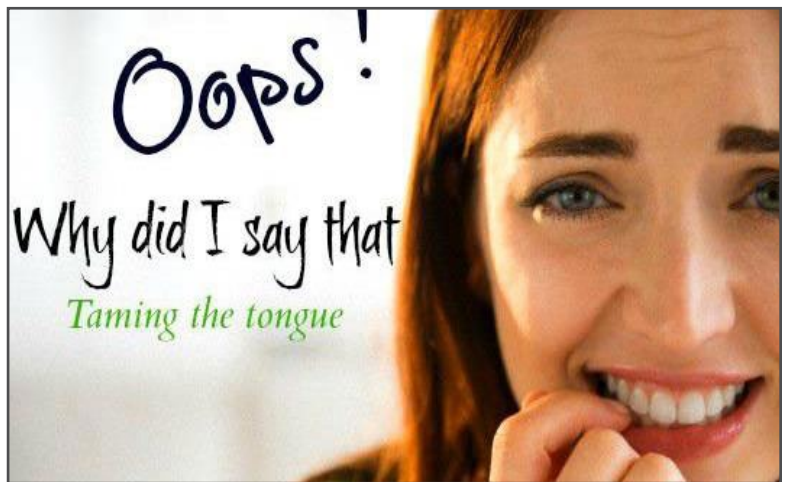
Question
3

1 Timothy 4:11-13

TEACH THE WORD:

Not only should Timothy **teach** these characteristics, but he should also model them in his own life; therefore, Paul instructs him to **be an example to the believers** in five primary ways ([v. 12](#)). First, Timothy should model proper speech (literally word). Proper speech consists of glorifying God through praise and thanksgiving ([Eph 5:4](#)), encouraging others and building them up ([Eph 4:29](#)), speaking the truth in love ([Eph 4:15](#)), and imparting godly wisdom ([Psalm 49:3](#); [Prov 10:13](#)). In contrast, speech unbecoming of a Christian consists of lying ([Exod 20:16](#)), gossiping ([1 Tim 3:11](#); [2 Tim 3:3](#)), failing to act with integrity by saying one thing and doing another ([James 5:12](#)), speaking rashly or in haste without seeking God ([James 3:8](#)), maliciously slandering others ([James 3:9](#)), complaining ([Phil 2:14](#)), speaking in anger ([James 1:19-21](#)), or using vulgar language and speaking with impropriety about sex ([Eph 4:29](#); [5:4](#)). The tongue is perhaps the hardest part of our body to control because we often speak without thinking, but once we have said or written

something in haste— either in person or on the Internet—it can never be taken back and can cause irreparable harm. Both the Internet and texting represent the two mediums through which we communicate most,



but perhaps think the least about how our communication may affect others; they provide a platform for us to share our life stories, but we must constantly keep in mind the power of our words when we post them on social media or send a text. Because we are not face to face with a person, it's often easier to criticize and make more direct and condescending statements than if we temper our words in person; thus, our words online often sound harsher and more negative than we may intend them. In addition, others don't filter their language at all and can talk about Christ and church on the same page that has a vulgar, profanity-laced tirade along with links to dirty jokes. We must remember that our speech should be radically different from that of the world around us so that we reflect the character of Christ. Therefore, before we post, send a text, or speak in person, we must judge whether our words glorify the Lord, encourage others, or they can be misconceived and hurt our testimony with the world that we're trying to reach with the gospel.

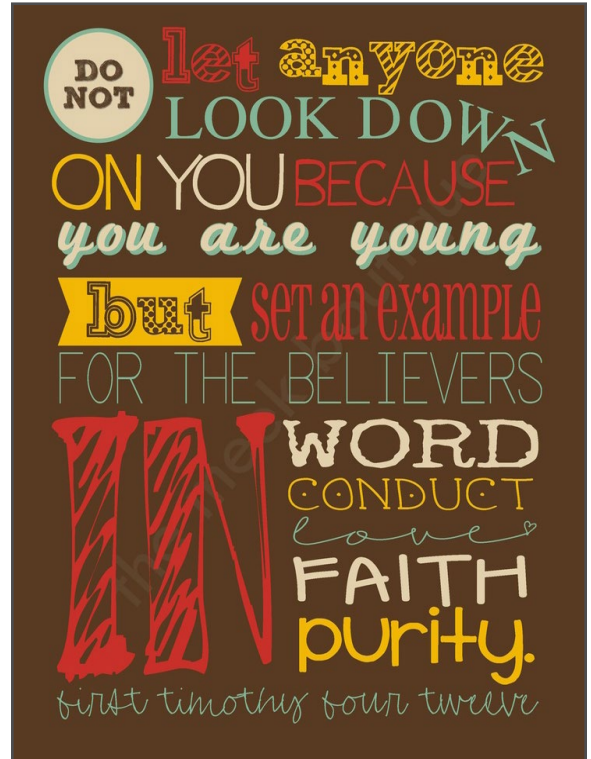
How can careless speech hurt our testimony?
How can we guard against careless speech
either in person or online?

Question
4

Instruct

Second, our **conduct**, that is our behavior, ought to complement our speech. We need to be consistent in our **conduct** so that it brings honor to the Father; in other words, we must act with integrity. The places where we go should honor Christ; what we view should be holy; what we hear should be reverent; what we do with our bodies should glorify our **Savior**. These certainly are broad statements, but before you go somewhere, do something, listen to something, or watch something ask: Would I be involved if Jesus were physically standing next to me? Even though He's not physically standing there, He still sees how we **conduct** our lives. In [Proverbs 20:11](#), Solomon writes, "Even a child is known by his

deeds, whether what he does is pure and right." Moreover, the way we act is often influenced by the ones with whom we associate; therefore, we also need to guard our **conduct** in terms of selecting the right people with whom we hang out. For in [1 Corinthians 15:33](#), Paul interjects, "Evil company corrupts good habits." We certainly must have a relationship to witness to others, but we cannot constantly subject ourselves to temptation and corrupt **conduct** and expect not to succumb to sin.



How does our conduct complement our speech?
What are some practical ways we can take to guard our conduct?

Question
4

Third, we ought to exhibit **love** in our lives. **Love** is the quintessential mark of a follower of Christ and it distinguishes us from the rest of the world. We can know what **love** is because God first demonstrated that **love** to us ([1 John 4:16](#)); therefore, we should be a conduit of His love whereby it flows from God through us to the others around us. As a result, we should **love** God ([Matt 22:37](#)), **love** others (i.e. our neighbors) ([Matt 22:39](#)), **love** fellow Christians ([John 13:35](#)), and even more radically, **love** our enemies ([Matt 5:44](#)). Fourth, not only should our lives be guided

by the principle of **love**, but they should also be characterized by our faithfulness. In God, we have a perfect example of faithfulness because He has always fulfilled His promises—never breaking or reneging on a single one. From the beginning, God has been faithful to provide a sacrifice to enable us to have eternal life ([1 Cor 1:9](#)); His faithfulness didn't depend

upon our response, but rather it's part of His innate character. In [2 Timothy 2:13](#), Paul asserts, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." Our faithfulness also doesn't depend upon anyone else except our personal relationship with the Father through Christ. Consequently, we should demonstrate our faithfulness to Him by being



Instruct

faithful in our study of the Bible ([2 Tim 2:15](#)), our prayer ([1 Thess 5:17](#)), our service ([1 Sam 12:24](#)), and meeting together for corporate worship ([Heb 10:25](#)).

Finally, Paul urges Timothy to be **an example in purity**. The word he uses here has a general meaning of being holy in one's actions—that is to have a clean heart in terms of ridding oneself of sin ([Psalm 51:10](#)).

Specifically, however, the word has a narrower meaning of being sexually pure. Paul desires Timothy to remain pure in every sense of the word and in [2 Timothy 2:22](#) he even encourages him to “flee also youthful lusts.” We should



certainly strive to be sexually pure in every facet of the word, but also pure in our thoughts, motives, attitudes, and actions. To **be an example** and to remain pure in both word and deed, Paul commands him to **give attention to reading** and teaching the Word so that the Ephesians may have sound **doctrine** ([v. 13](#)). The moment we fail to pay attention to God's Word or to godly instruction is the moment we falter in our pursuit of a Christ-like life because we forget what God has taught us.

What are the benefits of giving attention to reading God's Word and to hearing godly instruction in our lives?

Question
5

TREASURE YOUR GIFT:

After outlining the content of sound **doctrine** and how it should be practiced in our lives, Paul urges Timothy **not** to **neglect** his **gift** ([v. 14](#)). Although young, Timothy had been given the **gift** of leadership and teaching; Paul trusted him so much that he could send him in his place without worrying. The **gift** was given to him by God (see [2 Tim 1:6](#)), but it was confirmed through public testimony (i.e. **prophecy**) and by **the laying on of hands from the elders** in the congregation. We can **neglect the gift** that God has given us in two primary ways: 1) we can act unbecomingly of our transformed status in Christ by constantly sinning which harms our testimony and compromises our ministry; or 2) we can fail to use the gift altogether and merely become a spectator who sits on the sidelines and criticizes or complains. God has given each of us at least one spiritual **gift** to use in the church to help grow His Kingdom; not only does He give us the **gift**, but He equips us to use it and helps us along the way. God never calls us to ministry only to abandon us and make us do things on our own; therefore, we must use the **gift** in an appropriate manner by living a holy life which honors and glorifies the Lord.

How are you using your spiritual gift to grow God's Kingdom in FBCFW? How do you see others using their spiritual gifts?

Question
6

1 Timothy 4:15-16

TAKE HEED OF HOW YOU LIVE:

Paul tells Timothy to **meditate on these things**—that is on Scripture and how he should live as an **example**; therefore, to know how to behave and use our spiritual **gift** we must **meditate** on Scripture. To **meditate** simply means to study diligently or think deeply about what we have read so that we can apply it in our lives. In other words, we shouldn't read mindlessly to fulfill a reading plan where we don't retain any of the information nor should we simply read a devotional without spending significant time in God's Word. Instead, we must read in such a way that we hear God speak through His Word so that we can mature in our faith. This requires complete devotion and dedication—we should **give** ourselves **entirely** to the

pursuit of growing in the Lord. What would happen if we wanted to play a musical instrument and we rarely or never practiced; we never read anything or took lessons from another proficient musician? Our lack of dedication would **be evident to all** through the wrong notes we would

play, the lack of rhythm we would have, and even the obnoxious sound that we would make. After hearing us play, would anyone want us to instruct them?

If God has saved us, He has called us to make disciples. How can we make disciples if we ourselves are not dedicated or we fail to pay attention to how we live and what we teach? Paul first tells Timothy **to take heed to**



yourself and then to pay attention to what he teaches ([v. 16](#)). To **be an example** and share the gospel effectively, we must continually grow in the Lord and keep ourselves from being stained with sin; therefore, when we do these things, we can proclaim the gospel without hindrance. If we engage in sin and ungodly behavior, we only become hypocrites in the eyes of those whom we seek to reach and the Word of God seems powerless to transform. However, if we allow God to transform our lives thoroughly we will be able to proclaim the gospel and make disciples through our example in word and deed.

In-Depth Information



*Taken apart from its context, Paul's statement, **continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you**, can be misconstrued to mean that we are saved by works. Paul is not saying we are are saved by works, but rather we are saved through the proclamation of the gospel; this is why he emphasizes the ones **who hear** Timothy. People can be turned off from the gospel if our actions do not match our words. So Paul is instructing Timothy not to let his actions distract people from hearing the gospel and being saved.*

How can our actions and words hinder or help the spread of the gospel?

Question
7

To be part of God's story we must be completely devoted to maturing in our own walk in life so that we can become an example to others of how Christ has transformed us. This devotion requires that we be mature students of God's Word, focused on living righteously and teaching sound doctrine. The non-traditional students to whom we were introduced previously in this lesson were often successful because they minimized distractions and they invested significant, quality time in their studies. They didn't rush through assignments as though to fulfill a checklist; they didn't see them as useless or busywork. Instead, they viewed every assignment as an opportunity to learn and improve so that their "progress became evident to all." This week pray and ask God to reveal how much progress you have made in your life in Christ. Also, find another godly person who is trustworthy to give you an honest assessment of the kind of example that you have been. Ask them in which areas you have made progress and which areas in which you need to improve. This will help you to get a clear picture of the example that you have been in Christ. Above all, take the time to invest in your relationship with the Lord so that you can be an example to all, discipling them with the gospel so that they might be saved and they might grow in their faith as well.

Incorporate

Why is it important for us to be an example to others? How can we turn our example into an opportunity to disciple others?

Take time to evaluate your own life: 1) How good of an example are you with respect to the five areas mentioned in [1 Tim 4:12](#); 2) How often do you spend quality time praying and reading God's Word; and 3) How do you use your spiritual gift to invest in the Kingdom of God?

Journal: Document God's Work

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