

first steps

# WHAT DOES MY CHILD NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE GOSPEL

*WHY THE GOSPEL  
MATTERS FOR KIDS*

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## THE BIBLE IN ONE SENTENCE.

***“God made it, we broke it, Jesus fixes it.”***

***- Michael Williams***

What the Gospel

I remember reading a news article how in the renovation of the Lincoln monument they had planned to sand blast the scripture verses off the monument. The article went on to describe that there was sufficient outcry and the verses of scripture remain. As I was reading I was reminded afresh that our country was founded on the idea that there is a truth outside our small world that is far bigger than us. An external set of principles that guided men of faith and were respected by men who were didn't share that same faith. What they had in common was this idea of a moral framework that held our country. This common grace that

helped our country in good times and bad times. There was prayer in school there was the Ten Commandments in our courtrooms.

Our kids don't have that luxury. They are constantly bombarded by the incessant search for happiness. By the a culture that live in a way who's motto is best articulated by Sheryl Crow famous lyrics "If it makes you happy it can't be that bad."

***“Parents teach your kids the gospel is not just something that begins the Christian life but empowers it, shapes it and sustains it.”***

In a world that preaches happiness above all thing. That man is the center of the universe we must teach our kids that we live for the Glory of God alone. That our lives revolve around his life that our loves are properly ordered by our love for him.

# WHAT THE GOSPEL IS ALL ABOUT

Gospel simply means “good news.” The Bible uses the term to refer to the message that God has fulfilled his promise to send a Savior to rescue broken people, restore creation’s glory, and rule over all with compassion and justice. That’s why a good summary of the gospel is “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15).

God’s rescue, restoration, and rule apply to our spiritual condition but are not limited to spiritual realities. Through Jesus Christ, our God delivers his people from the eternal consequences of human sin that have touched everything. Our salvation includes us, but it’s also bigger than we are.

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Before we further explore these amazing truths, we need to recognize that the Bible does not trumpet them just to dazzle us. God reveals these truths so that sinners such as David and you and me can forever be free of the guilt and power of sin by trusting the good news that Jesus is the Lord who comes to save us. Following are key aspects of that good news.

## What God Requires, He Provides

We may not like the idea of someone identifying us as “sinners,” especially if we use that term to refer only to ax murderers and child molesters. But the Bible says that God is absolutely holy and that all who do not match his perfection are “sinners,” a term that simply means missing God’s standard. If we sin to any degree, we become something other than what God intended (Rom. 3:23; James 2:10). He made us to reflect his holy nature (1 Pet. 1:16). So our faults not only hurt us but also mar our relationship with God (Eph. 4:30).<sup>1</sup>

## What God Provides, He Perfects

Being justified by grace is wonderful, but that’s not all there is to God’s plan. Jesus Christ not only rescues us from past sin but also secures our eternity with him. This is why Jesus said that whoever would believe in him “shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God’s salvation is not like being saved from a tiger attack one day only to be cast back into the jungle the next day. The gospel includes the ways that God keeps us spiritually safe forever.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapell, B., Carson, D. A., & Keller, T. (2011). *What is the gospel?*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

## Whom God Perfects, He Uses.

The gospel has implications, personal corporate and redemptive. When we understand that God in his goodness provides all that we need it produces in us gratitude and worship. The result of the understanding of his provision through his son and his work in us through the Spirit of God is a desire to join him in the work he is doing in this world and in the world to come.

### ***Redemptive Purpose***

For the great privilege of participation in Christ's transforming work, we have been saved, and for this great purpose, we honor our King and reflect his grace in every dimension of our lives—our relationships, our occupations, our recreations, and our worship. We keep no aspect of our lives from reflecting his glory as he extends his reign over the whole of life.

Sacred and secular distinctions cannot be used to isolate the concerns of Christ from any sphere of life. He is the Lord who has come and will come to extend his gracious reign over all. He saves us in order to place his claim on us. As we find our greatest satisfaction in dedicating every aspect of our lives to him, he delights to use us for eternal purposes and to redeem the world through our individual and corporate efforts.

When the gospel writers declared the gospel of Jesus, it was typically with the declaration

that the Lord of all had come. No joy could accompany such a pronouncement if it marked only the beginning of a despotic rule. However, if the King comes to save sinners and if their salvation includes a renewed heart, an empowered life, and a transformed world, then his purpose and theirs is truly good news. The news is so good that even the angels long for it, and we who love him who provides this gospel also cherish its proclamation (1 Pet. 1:10–12). Whether we have known an imprisonment of body, mind, habit, guilt, relationship, or circumstance, Jesus Christ comes to save us eternally from it all. This is great news—and it is the gospel!<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Chapell, B., Carson, D. A., & Keller, T. (2011). *What is the gospel?*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

## How Do I Explain the Gospel to My Child?

*“God made it, we broke it, Jesus fixes it.” - Michael Williams*

### God made it.

Your kids need to know that gospel is so much more than getting saved. The gospel starts with the understanding that God made a beautiful world for us to live in and enjoy that we were to take care of and work in. This was to be done within the relationship of the family community and in the context of communion with God. He thought of everything that we would need to enjoy the world that he made and the person whom it was made by. Your kids need to know that in the garden before sin entered the world we needed nothing, there was no pain there was no sadness everything was perfect.

### We Broke it.

Your kids need to know that we are born broken because of Adam’s sin we are in need of rescue. Our kids need to know that we sin by making mistakes and we sin by making choices to do

what we know to be wrong. We need to be rescued. There is no hope for us to save ourselves. We can’t be good enough for God to love us. We can’t do enough good things to make up for the sins we have committed on purpose and on accident.

### Jesus Fixes it!

We need to be rescued and God saw this need before the creation of the world (Rev. 13:8). There is an inherent desire within each of us to fix broken things. This however is something that is unfixable. The good news is that God by his grace sent his only son to live a perfect life as our example and die in our place as our sacrifice. He didn’t just die for us he died instead of us. Jesus did what we could never do and that is make a way for us to be adopted into the family of God. Jesus restores the relationship that we lost through Adam and through our sins. He is perfect because we never could be no matter how many good things we do we could never pay God back the debt we owe him. Jesus rescuing you and me is a gift it’s free for us but cost him everything. The good news is Jesus restores but he is also coming back to fix the broken parts of our beautiful world. Jesus Fixes all things!



# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## The Gospel for you so you can explain the gospel to them.

### ***Justification: You Are Declared Righteous***

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). “Justified” is a legal word that describes a verdict. When God justifies, he pronounces a person righteous. When he condemns, he declares a person guilty. Justification and condemnation are about recognizing something that is already true.

When justice prevails, a guilty man will be sentenced and an innocent man will be acquitted. Being acquitted does not make a man innocent; it is the man’s innocence that leads to him being acquitted. In the same way, being sentenced does not make a man a criminal; it is the man’s crime that leads to him being sentenced.

As a matter of simple justice, we should expect God to condemn sinners and justify the righteous. But here is something truly amazing: God justifies sinners. Try to let that massive contradiction sink into your mind. God justifies sinners! How can he do that?

God presented Jesus as a propitiation for our sins (Rom. 3:25). That means when Jesus died, all the anger and hostility that God rightly has toward sin, wickedness, and evil was poured out on him. Like a cup filled with God’s judgment, Jesus drank all of it until it was empty. At the cross Christ absorbed God’s judgment that was due to our sin.

Faith unites us to Christ, and when we are “in Christ,” God counts all our sin as his and all his righteousness as ours. He bore our condemnation, and we are justified in him. Through the cross, God demonstrated his justice so as to be just and at the same time the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

If God justified only the righteous, how could we have any hope? The good news is that God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). As faith unites us to Jesus Christ, the power of his atoning sacrifice becomes ours. We are freed from the fear of condemnation due to our sin and guilt and brought into his marvelous love.

### ***Adoption: You Are Loved***

“When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba,

Father.’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir” (Gal. 4:4–7).

Through Christ, God adopts us into his family and loves us as his own sons and daughters. No other experience of love can compare to the love God has for you in Christ. Someone may pledge to love us “as long as we both shall live,” but God pledges his love to us in life, through death and for eternity. No one else can say to us, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).

God loves us with an everlasting love. That means that God loved us before we were born and even before the creation of the world. Christ had us in view when he came into the world, when he hung on the cross, and when he rose from the dead.

It is the special work of the Holy Spirit to convince us that we are a dearly loved child of God. “God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Rom. 5:5). The Spirit makes God’s love real in our experience. He connects us to the reality of God’s love for us that was demonstrated conclusively at the cross.

One of the challenges you will face in the Christian life is to wean yourself off the habit of discerning God’s love on the basis of feelings or circumstances. Our natural instinct is to feel that God loves us when we are healthy, have a good job, and life is going well. But when the wheels start to come off, our first instinct is to question God’s love and assume the worst.

What we ought to do is remind ourselves of the incalculable demonstration of God’s love in the cross. “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32).

### ***Sanctification: You Will Be Holy***

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it” (1 Thess. 5:23–24).

Sanctification is the progressive work of the Holy Spirit in a believer by which we grow in the life God is calling us to live. It is the desire and longing of every Christian’s heart. Bishop Ryle says:

Most men hope to go to heaven when they die; but few, it may be feared, take the trouble to consider whether they would enjoy heaven if they got there. Heaven is

essentially a holy place. . . . What could an unsanctified man do in heaven if by chance he got there?<sup>3</sup>

To paraphrase John Owen on this same point:

There is no idea more foolish or pernicious than this—that a person who is not sanctified, not made holy in this life, should afterwards be taken into the blessedness that consists in the enjoyment of God. Such a person cannot enjoy God, nor would God be a reward to them. Holiness is perfected in heaven, but it is always begun in this world.<sup>4</sup>

Justification and sanctification are always found together in Christ, and grasping how they interrelate is crucial to understanding the gospel. The two most common errors are to confuse or separate them. Confusion happens if you slide into thinking that your standing with God depends in some way on your performance in the Christian life. It doesn't. You are justified by faith in the finished work of Christ.

Separation occurs when a Christian gets the idea that since we are justified by faith alone, obedience to Christ really doesn't matter. It does. Christ holds the blessings of justification and sanctification in himself. When we embrace Christ by faith, these gifts become ours together. Nobody has the one without the other.

That's why the Bible says, "Without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). This doesn't mean that we are saved by being holy but that the pursuit of holiness is evidence that we are in Christ, who justifies us by his blood.

Paul prays for the sanctification of believers, "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through"—and we should pray for our sanctification too. But sanctification is also a promise: "The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24).

Hold on to that promise when you are discouraged over your lack of progress in the Christian life. What God's grace has begun in you will be completed for his glory and for your joy. God will give you the desire of your heart. You will be conformed to the likeness of his Son, forever (Rom. 8:29).

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<sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Holiness* (repr., Chicago: Moody, 2010), 58–59.

<sup>4</sup> <sup>4</sup> Owen's original wording is cited by Ryle, *Holiness*, 76–77.



## ***Glorification: You Will Reflect Christ's Glory***

“When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:4). Our lives remain a mass of contradictions. This is true of every Christian. We love Christ, but we feel the pull of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. We trust Christ, but we struggle with many doubts and fears. We have new life in Christ, but at the same time our bodies are subject to sickness, aging, and death.

Christians are a mass of contradictions, but it will not always be so. Your love for Christ will be complete, your faith will be turned to sight, and you will experience the joys of everlasting life in a resurrected body. You will be with Christ in glory forever.

Not only will you be in Christ's glory, but his glory will be in you. Paul says, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). Your Christian life is like a tree in winter. It looks bare, but it is alive; and when the spring comes, it will flourish. Its full glory is still to be seen.

Learning to anticipate your future glory is of great benefit in the Christian life. We must use this truth to our advantage when it seems that everything is against us. That's what Paul did: “Therefore we do not lose heart. . . . For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Cor. 4:16–17). The apostle is telling us from his own experience how to make sure that we don't lose heart.

God works through the debilitating trials of your life to form a unique reflection of Christ in you that will endure for his glory and to your joy forever. On that day, all that God promises will be ours:

1. We will fully reflect the image and likeness of God.
2. We will be delivered from the curse of evil.
3. We will share the joy of eternal life with redeemed people from all nations.
4. We will enter the presence of God redeemed by the blood of Jesus.
5. We will live this life under the blessing of Christ's rule in his kingdom forever.
6. We will love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and we will love our neighbor as ourselves.
7. We will rejoice forever in this new life from the grave that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## ***Consummation: We Will See God***

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea” (Rev. 21:1). John saw a new heaven and

a new earth—not a different earth, but a new earth. This earth will finally be redeemed from the curse and liberated from its bondage to decay (Rom. 8:21).

Then John saw “the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God” (Rev. 21:2). The city has gates facing north, south, east, and west, indicating that God has fulfilled his promise to gather a vast community of people from every nation on earth and to bring them into the joys of life in his everlasting kingdom.

One picture is never enough to capture the glory of what Christ has prepared for us. So alongside the city, John sees the image of a bride beautifully dressed for her husband (Rev. 21:2). Christ is the center of heaven’s joy, and all our joy will be in him.

John heard a loud voice from heaven’s throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God” (Rev. 21:3). Everything that separates us from God is gone. God shares eternal life with all his redeemed people.

God will wipe away every tear from your eyes. Sorrow will be beyond the experience of God’s people. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.

## Conclusion

God has made amazing promises that only God could deliver. They are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. These promises include regeneration, union with Christ, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification, and the promise of everlasting joy in the consummation of God’s redeeming purpose.

All this belongs to those who are in Jesus Christ. It can be yours. The promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off. Repent. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. By believing you will have life in his name (John 20:31).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, C., Carson, D. A., & Keller, T. (2011). *The plan*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.