

Good News people

Study 2: What exactly is the gospel?



Feedback: Any interesting stories following last week's study and the events of the past week?

Brief introductory group discussion:

What does the Bible mean when it talks about the gospel? What words best describe this?

We have seen that when we talk biblically about mission, we are talking about the mission of God to the world (ie. the sending of/ being sent by God). In the Bible, when God sends people out, he sends them to do and to be a variety of things in order to achieve his mission purposes. For example:

Joseph was sent (at first, not by choice) to be in a position to save lives in a famine (Genesis 45:7). Moses was sent (again, initially not by choice) to deliver people from oppression and exploitation (Exodus 3:10). Elijah was sent to influence the course of international politics (1 Kings 19:15-18), Jeremiah was sent to proclaim God's Word (Jeremiah 1:7). Jesus claimed the words of Isaiah that he was sent to preach good news, to proclaim freedom, to give sight for the blind, and to offer release from oppression (Luke 4:16-19; Isaiah 61:1). The first disciples were sent to preach and demonstrate the delivering and healing power of the reign of God (Matthew 10:5-8). As apostles they were sent to make disciples, baptize and teach (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus sent the disciples into the world as the Father had sent him (John 17:18; 20:21). Paul and Barnabas were sent with famine relief (Acts 11:27-30), and later to evangelise and church plant (Acts 13:1-13). Titus was sent to ensure trustworthy and competent financial administration and later for competent church administration (2 Corinthians 8:16-24; Titus 1:5).ⁱ And this isn't even an exhaustive list!

Look at the list above. Do any of these things surprise you? If so, which ones?

The New Testament word that is translated 'gospel' (euangelion) means good news. It's important that we remember this – because this helps us to understand the essence of what God wants us to show and share as disciples of Jesus. We're not trying to 'cramp people's style' or make them feel guilty – we are trying to help them to discover the life that God originally intended – 'real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of' (John 10:10, The Message).

The concept of bearing good news begins in the Old Testament. Galatians 3:8 tells us that good news was proclaimed by God to Abraham way back in the book of Genesis ['all nations will be blessed through you (Abraham)']. Good news was also proclaimed to the people of Israel in exile in Babylon, 'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the one who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings good tidings, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns"'. That's not just an 'old' worship song – those words were spoken into a specific time in history, when God's people needed a new sense of hope and good news for the future (Isaiah 52:7).

And of course, good news comes in its fullest sense in the incarnation of the Son of God. Mark, the first gospel to be written, begins, 'This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began just as the prophet Isaiah had written: "Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way..." Prepare the way for the LORD's coming!' (1:1-3)

Bible reading:	Get a volunteer in the group to read Luke 4: 14-21.
Group discussion (5 mins):	What does Jesus say he has been sent to do in v. 18-19? Write what he does in the left hand column below. Compare this with the words you shared at the beginning of this study (see notes taken), when describing the gospel. Are they identical/ a bit different/ very different? Is this a surprise to you?
Bible reading:	Get a volunteer in the group to read Matthew 28:16-20.

Get into smaller groups and complete the table below:

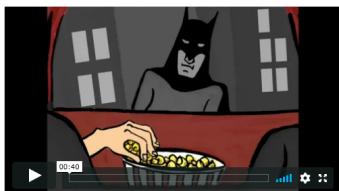
What does Jesus do (Luke 4) and what does he command his disciples to do (Matthew 28)?	LUKE 4:14-21	MATTHEW 28:16-20

Which of these two columns represents the gospel? They both do!

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify and write down the different people groups that exist within your community (e.g. young families, people living on their own, the active retired...)
2. Using the two lists above, what might good news look like for these people? *(This may seem like a bit of a generalisation – don't worry about that for now).*
3. How might...
 - a. Your church offer and communicate good news to the people (listed in 1.)
 - b. You as an individual offer and communicate good news to the people (listed in 1.) that you personally know and engage with?

(Spend 5 minutes on your own, prayerfully reflecting on this – write down anything that comes to mind. Please hold this question in your mind and reflect on it during the next week. At the end of the week, decide on and write down one way of being good news that you are going to commit to in the future):



Watch the animated videos from Week 1 & 2 – consider one of the ‘actions’ in these as a way of beginning to make progress.



Spend time praying that God will help you discern which groups of people he particularly wants your church to show and share good news with. With your church leaders, work out a plan for this, (ideally) during the next 4-6 weeks.

ⁱ Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God's People* (2010), Zondervan.