

Lesson 3: Being a Witness, Part 3

In our first lesson in this series, we covered the “what” and “whom” of being a witness, and we talked a bit about the “how” as we discussed sharing our testimony. In the second lesson, we focused on an evangelistic encounter Jesus had with the woman at the well in John 4, and we discussed the elements of a successful Gospel bridge. Today we’ll move forward by talking about important passages of Scripture pertaining to the Gospel, and we’ll discuss a good presentation to use when sharing the Gospel.

The Biblical Background to the Gospel

Before we delve into the Gospel presentation, take a look at some passages of the Bible that will provide a helpful background for understanding the good news (Gospel) of Jesus.

GOD’S DESIGN

In Genesis 1–2, we find out about God’s original design for the world. If you haven’t read these chapters yet, read through them now and then take a look at the following questions. If you have read them, go on to the questions for now and take a look at the chapters later.

- After we read about the creation of the entire world, including humans, we see in Genesis 1:31 that “God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.” What do you think the passage means by “very good?”
- What do you think it means that “God created man in His own image” (1:26,27)?

BROKENNESS

- Read Genesis 3. What went wrong? What sorts of bad things are introduced in this chapter?
- Romans 3:23 tells us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” What does it mean to “sin?” According to this passage, is there anyone who has avoided sin?

Scripture tells us that when God created the world, it was absolutely perfect. There was nothing wrong with the physical creation, with people, with relationships, etc. It was “very good.” But Genesis 3 introduces the concept of sin, which is fundamentally rebelling against God and doing things our own way instead of His way. While Adam and Eve were the first to sin, nobody avoids sin. In fact, other passages tell us that without God, we constantly seek to do things our own way, and we instinctively choose not to let God be God over us.

Read Romans 6:23. This verse says that the “wages of sin is death.” In the Bible, “death” is not limited to physical death. It describes separation from God and all of the bad things that go with it, including all the problems we saw in Genesis 3.

- Besides physical death, what are some examples of brokenness that come about from sin?

Unfortunately, we can't solve our sin problem. We certainly try, though. This ends up manifesting itself in all the attempts we make to try to get back to God or make our lives significant. In the end, none of them is able to fix the brokenness in our lives that we feel because this brokenness is caused by our separation from God. We can't earn our way back to God because He is perfect and we are not (remember Romans 3:23 above?). In fact, if we die separated from God, we will spend eternity in a terrible place that the Bible calls hell.

But there is good news!

THE GOSPEL

- Read Romans 5:6–8. How did God solve the problem that we couldn't fix?
- Flip forward to 1 Corinthians 15. In this chapter, Paul talks a lot about the Gospel, and he summarizes it in verses 1–8. How would you summarize those verses?

The term “Gospel” simply means “good news.” It refers to the good news that when we were helpless, Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead. He offers eternal life as a free gift.

- How does a person receive this free gift?
- Read Ephesians 2:8–9, a passage you read in the last section. What does this passage say about how a person receives the gift of eternal life, or “salvation”? Can a person earn salvation?

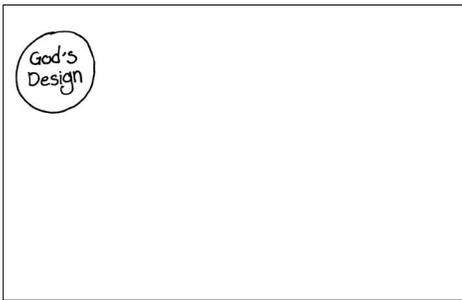
The message of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ died for our sins to give us a permanent relationship in God's family and to eliminate the brokenness in our lives. This salvation is received through faith—that is, by trusting in Jesus alone to save us from our sins and give us eternal life. We sometimes use the word “repent” in connection with trust because it communicates that we change our mind about Jesus and trust that He alone (not any set of good deeds) can restore us to a right relationship with God.

- Read John 10:10. What did Jesus mean by “abundant life” in this verse?

Once we have trusted in Jesus Christ alone to save us from our sins and give us eternal life, God begins a process to restore us to His original design. Jesus calls this “abundant life.” With His help, we pursue life as He intended it, and we experience what He wanted for us at the beginning. This process continues until we die and spend the rest of eternity with Him in a restored relationship that is perfectly happy, meaningful, and fulfilling—more so than we have ever experienced in our lifetimes.

The Three Circles Gospel Presentation

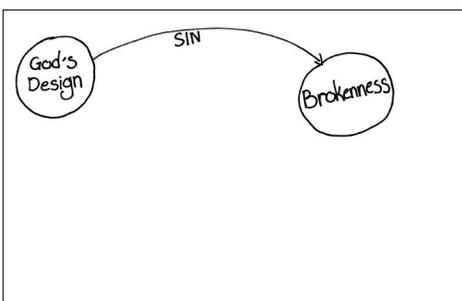
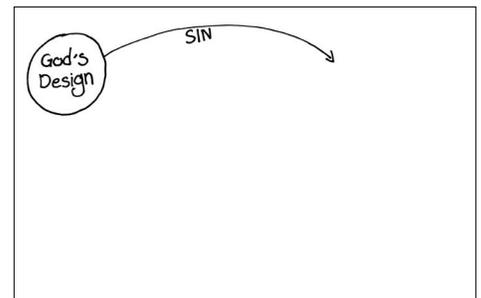
Having looked at the foundation of the Gospel, we can consider how to present this message in a clear way to those who may have very little understanding of the Bible. We recommend the Three Circles Gospel presentation, which is simple and understandable for people of various backgrounds and levels of biblical understanding. A strength of the Three Circles Gospel presentation is that it speaks directly to the problems and challenges that people easily recognize in the world and in their own lives.



To begin the Three Circles presentation, draw a circle on the upper-left portion of a page, and write, “God’s Design” inside it (an example of the presentation is available at [Vimeo.com/96082854](https://vimeo.com/96082854))

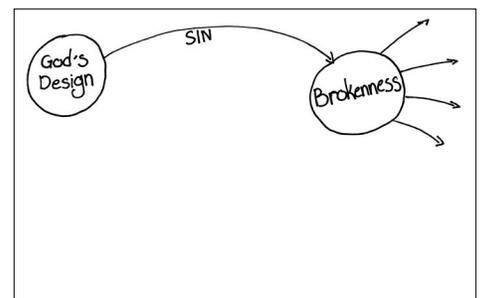
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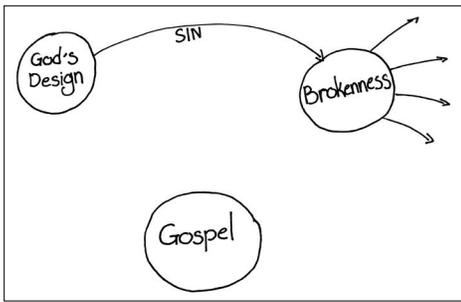
..... God’s original design for the world was perfect. Perfectly harmonious relationships. Perfectly fulfilling work. No death, no mourning, no pain. Unfortunately, though, human beings have chosen from the beginning to operate according to their own plan. When we operate according to our plan and deviate from God’s design, the Bible calls this “sin.”



..... Since God is good and sin is a form of rebellion against Him, sin distances us from God and everything that’s good. It leads to all sorts of bad things in our lives and in the lives of others. That’s why we all feel brokenness personally and in the world in general.

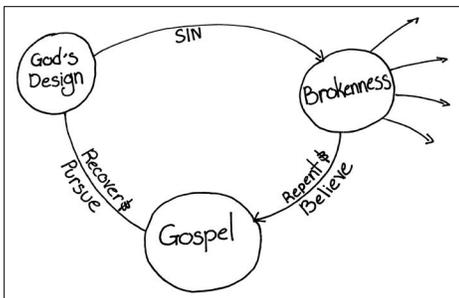
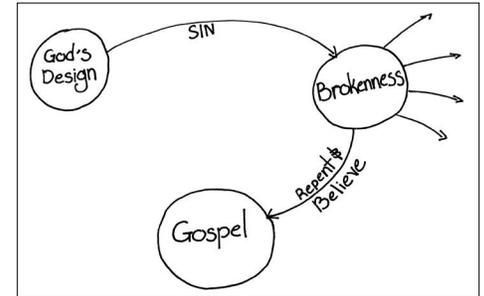
..... Of course, we all spend a lot of time and energy trying to correct this brokenness in our lives. We try to fix it in all sorts of ways: having a lot of money, being well-respected or loved, having a good family, or even doing good things for other people. Sometimes we even try to fix the brokenness by doing religious deeds. But unfortunately, when we try to fix our brokenness, it doesn’t work. The brokenness remains and it gets worse because if we die in this state, the Bible says that we will remain separated from God forever in a place called hell.





But there's good news! God knew that we couldn't fix our problem, so He provided a solution that He calls the "Gospel" (which means "good news"). About two thousand years ago, He sent His Son, Jesus, to the world. Unlike us, Jesus never sinned. But He, an innocent man, was crucified, and on that cross, God did a miracle. He put all of our sin onto Jesus. He made Jesus the perfect sacrifice for us. Jesus paid the penalty that we deserved for our sins and died in our place. Three days later, God raised Jesus from the dead, and this proved that Jesus was accepted by God as a perfect sacrifice. It proved that Jesus was able to save us and fix our brokenness.

The good news gets better, because the Bible tells us that we receive salvation from our sin and brokenness as a free gift. Instead of trusting in our attempts to save ourselves and fix our brokenness, we change our mind (or "repent") and believe, or trust, in Jesus alone to save us from our sins and make us right with God.



When we trust in Jesus alone to save us from our sins and make us right with God, we finally can move past our brokenness and recover and pursue God's design for us again. We find meaning and purpose in life and begin to experience life as God intended for us to experience it. Even better, we have the promise of eternal life with Him, the One who is the source of everything good. We have the ultimate hope, regardless of the circumstances of life.

At this point you can ask the person if there is anything keeping him from trusting in Jesus and if he is ready to trust in Him, suggesting that he could express that trust to God in a prayer similar to this:

God, I know I've done things my own way and departed from Your design. I've sinned against You, and, as a result, there's all sorts of brokenness in my life. I've tried to fix this brokenness myself, but I now choose to trust in Jesus alone and what He did as the solution to my separation from You. I believe He died and rose again, and that I am made right with You through His work. Thank you for granting me eternal life as a gift. Amen.

One important note: conversations often involve elements of brokenness in a person's life. In the midst of such a conversation, you may find it more natural to start with the second circle, then draw the first, and then the arrow from the first to the second.

Looking Forward

PRACTICING THE GOSPEL PRESENTATION

Take some time in your group now and practice your Gospel bridge and the Three Circles Gospel presentation. View this as an opportunity to get better in a friendly setting. Don't be concerned if it takes you a while to get the hang of the presentation. Once you learn it, you'll have an amazingly helpful resource for witness.

SET GOALS AND PRAY

In Lesson 3, you worked through various Bible passages that explain the Gospel. You also learned a method called the Three Circles Gospel presentation, which is an effective way to share the good news with people of various backgrounds and levels of biblical knowledge.

Now it's time to set goals and pray for success. Take a moment and ask God what He would have you do in light of today's lesson, or perhaps even in light of our previous lesson. Be as specific as possible, perhaps choosing something like this:

- "I'm going to try out the Gospel bridge with my coworker Jim."
- "I'm going to share the Three Circles Gospel presentation with Mike from my book club."
- "I'm going to teach the Gospel presentation to Linda, a fellow believer."

By now you know that your group plays a critical role in helping you fulfill the goal you set each week. Again, share your goals with one another, and submit these goals to God in prayer, asking Him for success.