Understanding the gospel

TBCF Teaching - 10/11/2026

1. For the next three weeks, we'll be looking at the gospel of Jesus Christ
    a. Understanding the gospel
    b. Experiencing the gospel
    c. Sharing the gospel
2. Common misunderstandings about the gospel
    a. The gospel is our one-way ticket to heaven
        i. Obtaining salvation and eternal life is only the beginning, not the end
        ii. We are called to a relationship that reconciles us to God and transforms us into the image of His Son
    b. The gospel is a message only for unbelievers
        i. Believers need to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling"
        ii. We should preach the gospel to ourselves every day, as a reminder of God's amazing grace and that without Him, we can do nothing
    c. The gospel is about what we need to do to be saved
        i. The gospel declares to the world what God has done, what He has already accomplished
        ii. Our response to Him through faith and obedience is secondary to His loving initiative in reaching out to us
    d. The gospel is a moral handbook, a means of self-fulfillment, or a social cause
        i. Morality, or "being a good person," will never lead to salvation
        ii. The gospel doesn't promote self-help, but rather self-denial
        iii. Focusing entirely on "the least of these" minimizes our own desperate need for a Savior
    e. The gospel is only about personal salvation
        i. Although God calls each of us to individually believe and receive Him, the gospel is much bigger than that
        ii. God's plan is the redemption of the world, restoring all of creation to its original state and purpose by making all things new

***What are some misconceptions you can add to the list?**

3. The gospel is Good News (Good Tidings)
    a. The word "gospel" comes from Greek word *euangelion*, meaning Good News
    b. Depending on translation, used at least 89 times in New Testament
    c. First use was to shepherds in Luke 2:10 – "good tidings of great joy" (NKJV)

d. Right after Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, He began His ministry proclaiming the Good News: *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.* (Mark 1:15, NKJV)

4. The gospel is entirely centered on Jesus Christ
    a. Isaiah prophesied it – *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* (Isaiah 53:5-6, NKJV)
    b. Jesus declared it – *Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.* (Luke 24:46-47, ESV)
    c. Paul reiterated it – *Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.* (1 Corinthians 15:1-4, NIV)
5. The gospel is for everyone
    a. Scripture clearly teaches this
        i. *…which will be to <u>all</u> people.* (Luke 2:10b, NKJV)
        ii. *Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that <u>everyone</u> who believes may have eternal life in him.* (John 3:14-15, NIV)
        iii. *And it shall come to pass that <u>everyone</u> who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* (Acts 2:21, ESV)
        iv. *This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants <u>all</u> people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.* (1 Timothy 2:3-4, NIV)
        v. *Let <u>anyone</u> who is thirsty come. Let <u>anyone</u> who desires drink freely from the water of life.* (Revelation 22:17, NLT)
    b. Although God offers salvation to all, only those who receive it by faith are saved
    c. "The Good News about Jesus is that He comes to all, including the plain and the ordinary. He comes to anyone with a heart humble enough to accept Him. Whoever you are, whatever you do, you can have Jesus in your life. Don't

think you need extraordinary qualifications; He accepts you as you are [not as you should be]." The Life Application Study Bible

6. The gospel is the power of God and the righteousness of God
    a. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the <u>power of God</u> that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the <u>righteousness of God</u> is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."* (Romans 1:16-17, NIV)
    b. God's power is proven in the gospel
        i. His power over sin by…
            1. living a perfect, sinless life
            2. bearing the sins of the world on Himself
            3. shedding His own blood to wash us clean
            4. forgiving all our trespasses and sins
        ii. His power over death by…
            1. raising Lazarus and others from the dead
            2. rising again on the third day
            3. descending and taking back the keys of Hades
            4. granting us eternal life
    c. God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel
        i. His righteousness that required a perfect sacrifice
        ii. His righteousness that caused Him to turn away from His dying Son
        iii. His righteousness that covers our guilt and shame
        iv. His righteousness that is credited to those who believe
7. The gospel is by grace through faith, not of works
    a. *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9, NKJV)
    b. The four key words here are grace, faith, gift, and works
    c. <u>Grace</u> is the "unmerited favor" of God towards us
        i. We deserve God's wrath, and without grace, that's what we would get
        ii. God showers us with His grace even in our sinful, fallen state
    d. <u>Faith</u> is the means by which we receive God's grace
        i. Faith and belief are used interchangeably in Scripture
        ii. In humility, we believe in the finished work of Christ, placing our trust in Him as the only remedy for our human condition
        iii. *Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."* (Luke 7:50, NIV)

iv. Faith is not a work (attempting to do something); faith is a response (acknowledging we can do nothing)

e. Salvation is a <u>gift</u> from God
   i. We have been saved, and that salvation has nothing to do with us; it is entirely wrought by God from beginning to end
   ii. A gift is meant to be received, nothing more

f. Salvation is "not of <u>works</u>"
   i. Salvation cannot be earned and can never be repaid
   ii. If the works of the law could save us, we would have reason to boast
   iii. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us…* (Titus 3:5a, NKJV)
   iv. *…all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.* (Isaiah 64:6b, NIV)

8. The gospel is simple
   a. Jesus with Nicodemus – *…whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16b, NKJV)
   b. Paul & Silas with Philippian jailer – *Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.* (Acts 16:30-31, ESV)
   c. Faith of a little child in Matthew 18
      "Jesus doesn't call people to childish behavior, but to childlike faith."
   d. *If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.* (Romans 10:9-10, NIV)

***What are some characteristics of childlike faith?**

9. The gospel is not easy
   a. We are called to be disciples, not just converts
   b. In Luke 9:23-24, Jesus says His disciples must deny themselves (humility), take up their cross daily (holiness), and follow Him (obedience)
   c. In Matthew 24:9, Jesus says His disciples will face hatred, arrest, persecution, and even death
   d. In the Garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus was being arrested, we read these haunting words: "Then all the disciples deserted him and fled." (Matthew 26:56, NIV)

<u>*Experiencing the gospel*</u>

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1. What is the means of salvation?
    a. God foreknows and predestines those who will be saved
        i. Foreknowledge ≠ Deterministic causation
        Predestination ≠ Arbitrary selection
        ii. God exists outside of space and time; He is in all places at all times (omnipresent); He sees all of human history as a continuum
        I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. (Isaiah 46:9b-10a, NIV)
        iii. Through His divine foreknowledge (omniscience), He knows… and has always known… who will receive His free gift of salvation by faith
        iv. Because He knows, He predestines (determines beforehand) several wonderful blessings for those who will believe in His name
            1) To be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29-30)
            2) To be holy and blameless before Him (Ephesians 1:3-4)
            3) To adoption as sons through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:5-6)
            4) To obtain a glorious inheritance (Ephesians 1:11-12)
        v. How do we know individual salvation isn't predetermined? Because of the two verses that follow…
        And you also were included in Christ <u>when you heard</u> the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. <u>When you believed</u>, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14, NIV)
    b. God initiates by drawing us to Himself
        i. Not by forced compulsion, but by gentle persuasion (fish vs elk)
        ii. The Father draws – *For people can't come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them from the dead. As it is written in the Scriptures: "They will <u>all</u> be taught by God." <u>Everyone</u> who hears and learns from the Father comes to me.* (John 6:44-45, NLT)
        iii. The Son draws – *"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw <u>all people</u> to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.* (John 12:32-33, NIV) This was in reference to the bronze serpent on a pole, lifted up in the wilderness. (Numbers 21)
        iv. The Holy Spirit draws – *And when he comes, he will convict <u>the world</u> of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me.* (John 16:8-9, NLT)

v. Creation itself draws – *They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So, they have no excuse for not knowing God.* (Romans 1:19-20, NLT)

c. We hear the gospel message about Jesus Christ
   i. Samaritan woman told her town
      1. *Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"* (John 4:28-29, NIV)
      2. *They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."* (John 4:42, NIV)
   ii. Someone shares the gospel, someone hears about Jesus, they believe in their heart, they confess with their mouth
   iii. *But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?... So, faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.* (Romans 10:14 & 17, NLT)

d. We respond to God's invitation of salvation
   i. Being spiritually dead (separated from God) does not negate our ability to respond to God's call
   ii. Refusing & rejecting – *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and <u>you were not willing</u>.* (Matthew 23:37, NIV)
   You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet <u>you refuse to come to me</u> that you may have life. (John 5:39-40, ESV)
   iii. Believing & receiving – *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* (John 1:11-13, ESV)

1. When we respond to God by personally receiving Him and believing in His name, He causes us to be born again as a child of God
2. Some teach that verse 13 proves there is no human free will or ability to respond to God; He saves us without our consent or involvement
3. This is actually saying that we aren't physically born again (John 3), but rather we are spiritually reborn by God
4. Not of blood (human lineage), not of the will of the flesh (human passion), not of the will of man (human planning)
5. The NLT brings clarity to John 1:11-13
   He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

e. At this moment of true faith in Christ, God saves us
   i. *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.* (1 Peter 1:8-9, NIV)
   ii. We are saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved
      1) <u>Past</u> – When a person first believes and receives the gift of salvation
      2) <u>Present</u> – While sanctification (the ongoing process of salvation) takes place
      3) <u>Future</u> – When Christ returns and salvation is completed through glorification

f. The Great Exchange then takes place
   i. We come to Jesus with absolutely nothing to offer
      1) Evil and wickedness (Romans 1:18)
      2) Foolishness (Romans 1:21-22)
      3) A depraved mind (Romans 1:28)
      4) Pride and selfishness (Psalm 10:2-6)
      5) No desire to do good (Psalm 14:3)
      6) No fear of God (Psalm 36:1)
   ii. Here is what we get in return
      1) The penalty for our sin is paid – redemption (Ephesians 1:7)

2) All our sins are cleansed and forgiven – remission (Hebrews 10:17-18)
3) The wrath of God is satisfied – propitiation (Romans 3:25)
4) We are no longer under condemnation – pardoned (Romans 8:1-2)
5) We are declared righteous before God – justification (Romans 4:22-25)
6) We pass from death to life – quickening (John 5:24)
7) We are changed into a new creation – regeneration (2 Corinthians 5:17)
8) We enjoy peace with God – reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)
9) We receive and are sealed by the Holy Spirit – indwelling (Acts 2:38)
10) We are accepted into the family of God – adoption (Galatians 4:4-6)
11) We become heirs of the kingdom – inheritance (James 2:5)
12) Our eternal destiny is guaranteed – security (2 Timothy 1:12)

iii. All of this happens instantaneously and irrevocably once we believe

2. What is the message of salvation?
   The essence of the gospel, and the central subject of the Scriptures, is that each person needs to be saved (Romans 3:23), each person can be saved (Romans 1:16), and God wants each person to be saved (2 Peter 3:9).

   There is nothing anyone can "do" in order to be saved. The only way a person can find salvation is by receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior. This simply means believing that…

   a. I am a sinner, who deserves God's judgment (Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23)
   b. Jesus Christ is God, and He came to earth as a man (John 1:14)
   c. Jesus died, in my place, in order to pay for my sins (Romans 8:3-4; Hebrews 10:14)
   d. Jesus came back from the dead, as He said He would (Romans 4:25; Mark 8:31)
   e. I am trusting in Jesus' sacrifice, and nothing else, to save me (Ephesians 2:8-9; John 3:5)

That's it! Anyone who truly believes those things is forgiven, changed from the inside out (James 1:18; 2 Corinthians 5:17), restored to a right relationship with God, and destined for heaven.

The most important decision a person will ever make is: do I accept and receive what God offers, or do I turn my back and walk away (Matthew 7:13)? Which one will you choose (2 Corinthians 6:2)?

Sharing the gospel

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1. God's command to all believers
    a. The Great Commission
        i. *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:18-20, ESV)
        ii. *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."* (Mark 16:15-16, NKJV)
    b. Go… Preach… Baptize… Teach
        i. We reach out to the lost – "go"
        ii. We share the gospel – "preach"
        iii. We don't save anyone!
        iv. We baptize those who believe – "baptizing"
            1. Baptism in water does not save a person… Belief in Jesus does
            2. Baptism is the outward confession of an inward transformation
            3. Baptism was well-known in first century Jewish culture
            "Recently, archaeologists uncovered around 50 large, ritual stepped baths, or mikvot (plural for mikveh), carved into the limestone bedrock along the southern slope leading up to the steps that would usher pilgrims into the Temple in the 1st century. They would journey from the valleys below, carrying their gifts and sacrifices. Then, before ascending the steps into the Temple, they would stop at one of the dozens of mikvot to

fully immerse themselves in the water in order to purify and dedicate themselves to the Lord and His ways. When Jesus' disciples heard His command to go and make disciples and baptize them, their past experience of Jewish baptism helped inform their understanding of what Jesus was asking them to do, even if they didn't yet fully understand how Jesus was applying it in a whole new way."
(Dan Price, "Baptism & Judaism," Friends of Israel blog)

4. Baptism was usually administered immediately in NT
Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. (Acts 8:36-38, NKJV)

v. We disciple the new believer – "teaching"
1. Obeying all that Christ commands is not a <u>prerequisite</u> for salvation; it is the <u>product</u> of salvation
2. Being a disciple and a discipler is part of the DNA of The Bridge
3. Discipleship classes for men and soon for women

c. We are not alone as we "go"
i. Verse 18 reassures us that Christ's power is behind us
ii. Verse 20 reassures us that Christ's presence goes before us
iii. *You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.* (Psalm 139:5, NIV)

2. Three "Words" critical to sharing the gospel
a. Jesus Christ
i. *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14, NIV)
ii. Every gospel presentation should center on the work of Christ
b. The Bible
i. *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* (Romans 10:17, NKJV)
ii. Use Scripture to reinforce where the gospel comes from
iii. Romans Road method
1. The Problem – Romans 3:23

2. The Consequences – Romans 6:23
3. The Provision – Romans 5:8
4. The Response – Romans 10:9
5. The Results – Romans 5:1, 8:1

c. Our personal testimony
   i. *They triumphed over him* [the devil] *by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.* (Revelation 12:11a, NIV)
   ii. No one can refute the gospel's transforming power in you
   iii. Testimony of the man born blind
   One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see! … Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.
   (John 9:25 & 32-33, NIV)

3. Three do's and three don'ts
   a. <u>Do not</u> be ashamed of the gospel
      i. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.* (Romans 1:16, NIV)
      ii. In the Greco-Roman culture built on honor or shame, Paul states that a rejected and humiliated Messiah, hanging on a cross, is no cause for shame
      iii. In today's world, we may feel shame because of church scandals, prosperity gospel preachers, politically motivated Christianity, or famous people whose lives don't reflect their profession of faith
      iv. The gospel itself is offensive: there's only one way to heaven, we are by nature wicked and lost, many "good" people will go to hell, and suffering is normal in the Christian life
      v. *The opposite of "ashamed of the gospel" is not "proud to be a Christian." The opposite of "ashamed of the gospel" is "passionate to spread the gospel."* – J.D. Greear
   b. <u>Do not</u> deny the Lord before men
      i. On the way to the Mount of Olives, Peter emphatically told Jesus that even if everyone else deserted Him and even if he had to die with Him, he would never deny Him… but a few hours later, he did just that
      ii. *Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; <u>for they loved human praise more than praise from God.</u>* (John 12:42-43, NIV)

iii. Fear is the main reason we may deny knowing Christ: fear of ridicule, fear of rejection, fear of isolation, fear of persecution, fear of death
iv. The penalty for denying our Lord is fairly severe… *Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.* (Matthew 10:32-33, NKJV)

c. Do not neglect so great a salvation
   i. In John 4, the disciples went into the village to buy food, but forgot to tell the villagers that Jesus was waiting at the local well
   ii. Meanwhile, the Samaritan woman left her water jar there beside the well and ran back to the village to tell them
   iii. *Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!* (John 4:35, NKJV) *Wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest.* (John 4:35, NLT)
   iv. The immediate often distracts from the eternal
   v. *Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. … How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?* (Hebrews 2:1 & 3, ESV)

d. Do have compassion for the lost
   i. The eyes of Christ - *Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.* (Matthew 9:35-36, NKJV)
   ii. Are you moved with compassion for the checkout clerk at the MiniSuper, for the handyman who fixes your appliances, for the guys you play pickleball with (Darrell), for the neighbor who blasts reggaetón late into the night, for the expats at the Tuesday Market?

e. Do boldly proclaim the truth of the gospel
   i. Peter & John healing the lame man on the steps of the Temple
   ii. *Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."* (Acts 4:18-20, NIV)
   iii. After their release from the Sanhedrin, they immediately went into a prayer meeting with the other believers

iv. *Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.* (Acts 4:29, NIV)
v. They didn't pray for deliverance or even protection, but boldness

f. <u>Do</u> plant and water, but let God bring the increase
i. *After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God's servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow.* (1 Corinthians 3:5-7, NLT)
ii. Paul planted new churches; Apollos worked in those churches
iii. Whether you are at The Bridge now, helping to plant the seed in this place, or you come years later, making sure the tender plants are well-watered, always remember: it is God who does the work of growth in the hearts of people