

## Keeping It Simple

- If the gospel were not simple, we would have no hope:
  - If God cannot be clear and simple to ordinary people, what is the probability that humans will be able to explain it better?
  - The opportunity for eternal life would be weighted toward those of higher intellectual ability.
- The gospel must be something we can do:
  - People have different levels of self-discipline. Performance weights the opportunity for eternal life toward conformists.
  - If it is all God's doing, we are puppets and God is deceiving us.
  - If we are forgiven without improvement, we will be eternal failures. Do I want to spend eternity with me?
- People think of the gospel as complicated
  - The primary reason is that the originals were written in languages we do not know. The translations carry some unfamiliar syntax with them.
  - Those who make it sound complicated are honored for their "insight."
- Examples of the simplicity of the presentation of the gospel
  - Acts 17:22 – 31 Paul was invited to address a gathering of some of the most educated and intelligent people of that day. What were his points?
    - I see you care about God
    - Some of what you do about God you know does not make sense.
    - God is involved in the things of earth and is available to all who seek Him.
    - Judgment Day is real
    - Jesus proved that He has what we need.
  - 1 Thessalonians Paul was able to teach only a few weeks in Thessalonica before being driven out by enemies. When Paul wrote them, he praised their evangelism (1:8). How could doctrinally uninformed people be so successful at spreading the gospel?
    - 1:3 You act on God's promises, do what is best for those around you, and are patient that God will make all this work out.
    - 1:6 You have joy of the Holy Spirit
    - 1:9, 13 You changed
    - 1:10 You look forward to Judgment
  - Acts 2:14 – 39 Peter spoke to a group of Jewish people who had a background in the prophets and in current events. He spoke of simple topics.
    - You know what the prophets wrote, and you see it happening.
    - You know of Jesus' miracles.
    - We saw Jesus alive again.
    - Jesus fits the description of the Messiah.
    - Jesus promises forgiveness and help to those who proclaim Him to be Lord.
- How can we express the gospel simply?
  - Know what complicated topics your listener has accepted and avoid those topics.
  - Don't be afraid to say
    - I don't know but I'll get back to you.
    - That sounds complicated.

- Avoid “religion words.” The hearer may have a different definition.
- Focus on
  - Evidence
  - Acting on God’s promises (see Promises handout)
  - Doing what is best for others
- Your expectations or attitudes direct what you will get out.
  - Topical studies (word studies) may be interesting to believers but are inappropriate for outsiders and maybe for new Christians.
    - Even if the immediate context is considered for each passage that contains the word or topic under study, the larger context may be overlooked.
      - Israel versus the church
      - The transition from John and Jesus to the early church to the mature church.
      - Old Testament references
      - God’s different styles of interaction over history
    - Without a solid “big picture,” topical studies remain separated and never merge into that “big picture.”
  - If the reader is looking for how to perform to God’s expectations, the result will be
    - Never doing enough
    - Legalism
    - Failure
  - If the reader is looking for how to be forgiven by grace,
    - Character development is overlooked.
    - Results in an endless cycle of failure and forgiveness.
    - The focus is still on me.
  - The objective is faith
    - God created the universe as an incubator for faith
    - One cannot have faith (trust in) the promises of God without knowing what God promised.
    - Therefore, read the Scriptures to find the promises of God so faith can happen and our purpose be fulfilled.
    - The danger is exchanging “How much faith?” for “How many works?”
  - The challenge is developing a mindset that stops reacting to authority but rather is interested in how to do what is best for other spirits.