

A Gospel Primer – Group Discussion Guide

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How to Use This Guide

This is an interactive guide. Use and adapt it as is most helpful.

Some groups take one section per meeting; others combine multiple sections.

Spirit-Directed Prayer

At every meeting:

- Read Scripture & Gospel Primer Aloud
 - Pray together
 - Recognize the spiritual warfare each member is facing.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your prayer time.
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SECTION 1: THE NEW TESTAMENT MODEL

Read: Ephesians 1–3; Colossians 1–2

“Re-preaching the gospel and then showing how it applied to life was Paul’s choice method for ministering to believers, thereby providing a divinely inspired pattern for me to follow when ministering to myself and other believers.”

Discuss:

- What does the Lord bring to mind as you read?
 - Pause anytime to reflect on what the Spirit stirs.
- In what ways do you need to preach the gospel to yourself?
- In what ways do you need to preach the gospel to other believers?

Prayer: Pray for ears to hear and a heart to believe the gospel each and every day

SECTION 2: MY DAILY NEED

Read: Philippians 4:4-8

Discuss:

- What does the Lord bring to mind as you read?
 - Pause anytime to reflect on what the Spirit stirs.
- What lies do you hear most often?
- What truths in Scripture combat these lies?
- In what ways do you try to satisfy your daily need apart from the gospel?
- Share a time when gospel truth helped you overcome lies or condemnation.

Prayer: Spend time praying over one another, specifically against lies mentioned. Pray for the truth of God to overtake the lies. Is the Spirit prompting you to speak any particular truth or passage of Scripture to someone?

SECTION 3: THE POWER OF GOD

Read: Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:2; 1 Corinthians 1:24

Discuss:

- What is the common theme in these verses?
- How can we give the gospel a central place in our thoughts each day?
- Why do we often fail to enjoy the gospel even when we know it?
- How can we help each other center our thoughts on the gospel—both together and apart?

Prayer: To be unashamed of the power, wisdom, truth, and beauty of the gospel in our lives and in our witness

SECTION 4: MY DAILY PROTECTION

Read: Ephesians 6:14–17

“That God would tell me to ‘take up’ and ‘put on’ this gospel armor alerts me to the fact that I do not automatically come into each day protected by the gospel. In fact, these commands imply that I am vulnerable to defeat and injury unless I seize upon the gospel and arm myself with it from head to toe.”

Discuss:

- Where have you historically not protected yourself with the gospel?
- Where are you not applying that protection now?
- What defeats have you experienced from not wearing gospel armor? How can we pray for healing?

Prayer: Pray through the armor of God for each person by name.

SECTION 5: TRANSFORMED BY GLORY

Read: 2 Corinthians 3:18

“Consequently, as I habitually gaze upon the glory of the Lord revealed in the gospel, I can know that actual deposits of God’s very glory are attaching themselves to my person and transforming me from one level of glory to another.”

Discuss:

- Where do you behold God’s glory in daily life?
- Where could that increase?
- Share a stressful or fearful moment—how does this discussion apply?

Prayer: Pray as the Spirit leads.

SECTION 6: A CURE FOR DISTRUST

Read: Genesis 2:16-17, 25; Genesis 3

“Every time I deliberately disobey a command of God, it is because I am (in that moment) doubtful as to God’s true intentions in giving me that command. Or is He withholding something from me that I would be better off having?”

Discuss:

- Where does disobedience happen most for you?
- Where do distrust questions arise?
- What are the ‘friendly signposts’ of God’s loving commands?
- How do these increase your trust?

Prayer: Pray as the Spirit leads.

SECTION 7: SUFFICIENCY IN THE GOSPEL

Read: 1 Peter 1:3-5; 2 Peter 1:3-4

“The gospel serves as the means by which God daily contrasts me into what He wants me to be and also serves as the channel through which He gives me my inheritance every day of my Christian life. Hence, it could be said that the gospel contains all that I need ‘for life and godliness.’”

Discuss:

- What do you want to be known for?
 - One way to discover this is by considering what you make sure someone knows about you within the first five minutes of meeting you.
- How does that align with the gospel?
- Where are you seeking fulfillment outside the gospel?

Prayer: Pray as the Spirit leads.

SECTION 8: FREEDOM FROM SIN'S POWER

Read: Romans 8:1-4

Questions:

- When do you feel most guilty?
- When do you feel most liberated?
- How have you preached the gospel to yourself in the past?

Prayer: Pray together.

SECTION 9: RESTING IN CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Read: Romans 5

"On my worst days of sin and failure, the gospel encourages me with God's unrelenting grace toward me. On my best days of victory and usefulness, the gospel keeps me relating to God solely on the basis of Jesus' righteousness and not mine."

"Freed from burdens ... I now can put my energies into enjoying God, pursuing holiness, and ministering God's amazing grace to others."

"On my worst days...the gospel encourages me."

"On my best days...the gospel keeps me grounded in Christ's righteousness."

Discuss:

- Where do you devote most of your energy? How has this changed over the course of your life?
- What is a "best day" for you? What is a "worst day" for you?

Prayer: Pray over one another as the Spirit leads you.

SECTION 10: SLAVE TO CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Read: Romans 6

"And now I am daily called by God to surrender the members of my being as slaves to do whatever this righteousness dictates."

"Hence, it could be said that 'sanctification' is merely the lifetime process wherein I joyfully surrender myself to God's imputed righteousness and then do whatever this righteousness directs me to do."

Questions:

- Which parts of your life are most surrendered?
- Where do I strive most against the gospel?
- What is God directing you to do in righteousness right now?
- How can this group help you walk in obedience?
- What have been the seasons of greatest sanctification in your life?

Prayer: Pray as led by the Spirit

SECTIONS 11–12: LOVING THE SAINTS & MY INHERITANCE

Read: Ephesians 1:18, Section 12 of A Gospel Primer

"And I do this not merely by speaking the gospel words to them, but also by living before them and generously relating to them in a gospel manner. Imparting my life to them in this way, I thereby contribute to their experience of the power, the Spirit, and the full assurance of the gospel."

Discuss:

- Share a time when you experienced gospel-centered friendship.
- In what ways are you imparting yourself to the people in your group?
- In what ways are you withholding yourself from people in your group?
- Who are the "gifts" in your life?
- How has God used people in your life to show your inheritance?

Prayer: Pray as led by the Spirit.

SECTION 13: STIMULATED TO LOVE OTHERS

Read: Titus 3:1–8

Discuss:

- Where do you see God's love in this passage?
- How does this apply to people you find difficult to love?
- Who do you need to forgive or seek forgiveness from?

Prayer: Pray for reconciliation.

SECTION 14: A HEART FOR THE LOST

Read: Luke 15:1-7; Sit Silently before the Lord, and ask Him to reveal names and faces

Discuss:

- Who came to mind?

Prayer: Pray for lost friends, family, coworkers, neighbors. Ask the Lord what part you play in sharing the gospel.

SECTION 15: CULTIVATING HUMILITY

Read: James 4:6

Discuss:

- How is your sin rooted in pride? Share specific examples.
- How do your group preferences keep you from deeper relationships?
- Where do you want pride to wilt most right now?

Prayer: Confession and repentance.

SECTION 16: OBEDIENCE BORNE OF LOVE

Read: John 14:15-17

Questions:

- Where do you doubt God's love?
- Where is He inviting you to fuller obedience?
- How do you move from duty toward delight?

Prayer: Pray as led.

SECTION 17: LIBERATION FROM SELF-LOVE

Read: John 3:16; Romans 5:8

"I fear that if I do not love myself there would be no one left to love me quite as I do."

"Arrogance lies underneath both of these causes: I love myself supremely because I am the most worthy person I know to be loved and also because I think I can do a better job at it than anyone else." Share examples of your own self-love.

Discuss:

- Have you had thoughts like the quotes above? Share examples of self-love.
- Explain how the gospel breaks these chains of self-love
- In what relationships do you feel self-love most strongly?

Prayer: Pray for freedom in Christ.

SECTION 18: PERSPECTIVE IN TRIALS

Read: James 1:2-4, Romans 8:28-29

“The good news about my trials is that God is forcing them to bow to His gospel purposes and do good unto me by improving my character and making me more conformed to the image of Christ.”

Discuss:

- Share a current trial. How have you seen gospel purposes in it?
- How are trials conforming you to Christ right now?

Prayer: Embrace trials simply as rugged friends in your life.

SECTIONS 19–20: EXPOSED BY THE CROSS

Read: Romans 7:7-13

“Likewise, the deeper I go into the gospel, the more I comprehend and confess aloud the depth of my sinfulness.”

“With the worst facts about me thus exposed to the view of others, I find myself feeling that I truly have nothing left to hide.”

Discuss:

- What are some sins of omission in your life, commands of God that you passively omit from your daily walk?
- What are some sins of commission in your life, commands of God that you actively disobey in your daily walk?
- How do sins of omission differ from sins of commission? Share examples from Scripture or your own life.
- How would living openly (“I have nothing to hide”) change relationships?
- To whom do you open up to like the last paragraph of Section 20 in A Gospel Primer describes?

Prayer: Jesus already outed you on the cross. Make this your focus as you pray over one another while the Spirit leads you.

SECTION 21: CHOSEN FOR PRAYER

Read: John 17; “Draw Near” passages footnoted on page 36 in this section of A Gospel Primer

“Therefore, I can infer that prayer is not simply something I’m allowed to do as a Christian; prayer is actually one of the great purposes for which God chose to save me.”

“As a chosen one of God, I was saved to pray; and whenever I come into God’s presence to behold Him, worship Him, or make a request of Him, I am arriving at the pinnacle of God’s saving purposes for me.”

Discuss:

- Share about a time you drew near to God. What was the outcome?
- Do you experience God as near regularly? Why or why not?
- What most regularly keeps you from drawing near?

Prayer: Draw near to God together through prayer

SECTION 22: SAVED FOR GOOD WORKS

Read: Ephesians 2:10, John 4:32–34

“Indeed, gospel-motivated works do for the soul what food does for the body.”

“Hence, the fact that God has prepared such works for me to do becomes a part of what makes the gospel such great news to me.”

Discussion:

- Are you spiritually full or starving?
- Are you doing the works God prepared for you?

Prayer: Confidence to take a step of faith into God’s planned work for us

SECTION 23: A HEART FOR THE POOR

Read: Luke 6:20-23

“When I see persons who are materially poor, I instantly feel a kinship with them, for they are physically what I was spiritually when my heart was closed to Christ.”

Discuss:

- How does the gospel equalize people?
- Who are “the least of these” in your life?
- How are you serving them individually and as a group?

Prayer: Pray as led.

SECTIONS 24–25: ALL THINGS CRUCIFIED

Read: Galatians 2:20 and the first full paragraph on page 41 of A Gospel Primer out loud.

“I should expect every day to encounter circumstantial evidence of God’s commitment to my dying.”

“Indeed, on the other side of each layer of dying lie experiences of a life with God that are far richer, far higher, and far more intimate than anything I could have otherwise known.”

“Christ says, ‘Give me All. I don’t want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good...Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours.’” –C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Discuss:

- Which statement do you identify with most?
- Write your own “I must die” statement.
- What confession can you share with the group?
- How does God’s commitment to your dying make you feel—anxious or hopeful?
- Share examples of how death led to greater life.

Prayer: Pray for full & continual surrender to Him.

SECTION 26: HOPE OF HEAVEN

Read: Romans 8:18-25

“The Apostle Paul could not rehearse gospel blessings in Romans 5–8 without being reminded of his anxious longing for future glories awaiting believers in heaven.”

Discuss:

- What does it look like to “yearn to be with Christ”?
- Where do you struggle to hope in heaven?

Prayer: Pray over one another as the Spirit leads.

SECTION 27: MORTIFYING THE FLESH

Read: Romans 8:12-17

“Do you mortify? Do you make it your daily work? Be always at it while you live; Seize not a day from this work; Be killing sin or it will be killing you.”—John Owen

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus Look full in His wonderful face And the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of His glory and grace” —Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

“Consequently, the key to mortifying fleshly lusts is to eliminate the emptiness within me and replace it with fullness; and I accomplish this by feasting on the gospel.”

“To the degree that I am full, I am free. Eyes do not rove, nor do fleshly lusts rule, when the heart is fat with the love of Jesus”

Discuss:

- What do your sinful appetites reveal?
- When was the last time you ate freely of God’s blessings and were more satisfied in Christ than in your flesh?
- What does satisfaction in Christ tangibly look like in your life? What has it looked like historically in your walk with Jesus? What can it look like now?
- How does fullness lead to freedom?

Prayer: Pray for fullness in Christ.

SECTION 28: THANKFULNESS ENRICHED BY RELIEF

Read: Psalm 23:5; “Two-layered gratitude” on page 48 of A Gospel Primer

Discuss:

- How does your heart tend to view “the cup” given to you? How does this tend to work itself out in your actions?
- How does your heart resonate with Psalm 23:5 in regard to your present circumstances?
- What personal blessings come to your mind? Share them with one another. How do you view these in light of the “two-layered gratitude” discussed on page 48 of A Gospel Primer?
- Plan a meal together to practice gratitude and thanksgiving. You may consider using the previous question or verses footnoted in this section as the basis for your dinner discussion and practice.

Prayer: Pray over one another as the Spirit leads you.

SECTION 29: THE ULTIMATE PRIZE

Read: John 17:3

“Rather, the essence of eternal life is intimately knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.”

Discuss:

- What is intimately knowing God?
- Why is it the ultimate prize?
- How can the group help each other pursue intimacy with God?
- What aspects of your intimacy with God translate over into your personal relationships? With family? This group? At work?
- How can we grow in our intimacy with God corporately?

Prayer: As the Spirit leads.

SECTIONS 30–31: MY MANIFESTO & TO HIM BE THE GLORY

Read: Ephesians 6:18-20

“Without boldness, my life story will be one of great deeds left undone, victories left unwon, petitions left unprayed, and timely words unsaid.”

“Nothing nourishes boldness in me like the gospel.”

“Clearly, the gospel generated in Paul an enormous passion for God’s glory; and the gospel does the same in me as I make it the meditation of my heart each day... I figure, then, that my unworthiness must actually be useful to God, because it magnifies the degree to which His grace might be glorified as He lavishes His saving kindness upon me.”

Discuss:

- What deeds/words/prayers have been left undone in your life?
- Where do you lack boldness? How can the gospel banish fear?
- How can your group help cultivate boldness?
- How is God glorified in your weakness? Does knowing that God works through weakness help you embrace the gospel with greater passion? How does it drive you to help others embrace the gospel?

Prayer: Pray as the Spirit leads.