



FULL GOSPEL: WHAT IS THE FULL GOSPEL?

One of the critical questions a disciple needs to be able to answer is, “What story do I find myself in?” The Gospel is the key to making sense of the world we live in. What we have come to understand is that the majority of Christians articulate the Gospel in the following manner: Jesus came to die on a cross for my sins so that I can be with Him in heaven. And while this is definitely a part of the Gospel, it is not the Full Gospel.

The Gospel. God’s story. And His invitation for everyone’s story to be a part of His story in a personal way.

Before we move on, I need to make sure that we’re all on the same page about this. Because when we talk about God’s story, we have to talk about the Gospel, and when we talk about the Gospel, we have to know what it is *exactly*. Because everything about being a Disciple of Jesus is based on what it is exactly. The word *gospel*, or εὐαγγέλιον in Greek, literally means “good tidings” or “good announcement”. That’s literally. But, when you use this word in the context of the ancient Greco-Roman world in the first century, then you have to think about how this good announcement was used and why. “Gospel” was used to give a proclamation of a favorable military announcement, more often than not, of “*Roma victa*” or “Rome has conquered!” It preceded the content, communicating, “Everyone, we have a good announcement that is for your benefit: Rome is victorious!” As if by preceding it, it would assuage the crowd that Rome being victorious was indeed for their own personal good. But most of the civilians of the Roman world were agents of the Caesar because of being conquered themselves.

But, Jesus deliberately uses this word, *gospel*, a favorable announcement of military allusion, to precede His main point, and He’s telling the people that this point is truly for their personal good. Upon stepping on to the scene, Jesus starts by saying, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel* [Mark 1:15]. Let me paraphrase. Everyone, the time that God had appointed a long while ago is here; His Kingdom, the range of His effective will, is coming and has come, so what are you waiting for? Drop what you’re doing, turn direction and believe in the announcement I just made. Did you hear me? The Kingdom of God is here and it’s for your good. The *Gospel* is essentially code for announcing the commencement of Jesus and His Kingdom. It’s the story that personally invites you into your good.

So, what’s the Gospel? What’s God’s story?

half vs full gospel

If we’re honest with ourselves, most of us have heard a rendition of the Gospel going something like this: we are sinners in need of a Savior and Jesus Christ saves us from our sins and death and now we will live in Heaven with Him for eternity. The end. And while this story is not untrue, it is just a portion

God's story — and the danger in presenting just a partial view of a story is that we begin to answer personal questions about our own story through a partial lens. Simply put, all of us want a story to answer two personal questions in my life:

1. Who am I?
2. What am I supposed to do?

And if God's story is indeed the above, then it answers those two pivotal story questions as such:

1. I am a sinner
2. I am waiting to go to Heaven

And a story that speaks to our post-modern culture that says we are identified with a word that, at best, is an adjective that is archaic and offensive at the same time, and at worst, an acute accusation from a bygone abusive system against modern individuals that it's never taken the time to get to know. That and along with the story that our sole gain and purpose in life is to win a golden ticket from an obsolete God to spend perpetuity sitting on a cloud and playing the harp. Our starting point is that we are wrong. And our end game is boring. Not only does this narrative not resonate deeply and personally with people, but it's also not correct. The Gospel is good news for all humankind. God's story personally invites us into good news.

Mark 1:14-15 ESV

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the good news."

(We never 'get beyond the gospel' in our Christian life to something more 'advanced'. The gospel is not the first 'step' in a 'stairway' of truths, rather, it is more like the 'hub' in a 'wheel' of truth. The gospel is not just the A-B-C's but the A to Z of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom, but the way we make all progress in the kingdom. [Tim Keller])

When we refer to the Full Gospel, we are not just talking the first four books of the New Testament. Gospel is Greek for "good news," and we are referring to the big story that God has been telling since the beginning of time. The Full Gospel can be broken down into four main acts.

The Full Gospel in Four Acts:

Act I: Creation:

God is Good [Psalm 119:68; Psalm 136:1]

God created everything Good [Genesis 1:1-25]

God created you and me Good [Genesis 1:26-27]

God created you and me to do Good [Genesis 1:28-31]

We are good with God (we have perfect relationship with God, with each other, with creation)
[Genesis 2:15-25]

Act II: Rebellion:

The LIAR (the satan) thinks God is NOT good [Isaiah 14:12-15]

The LIAR lies to you and me and says God is NOT good [Genesis 3:1-5]

We believe the lie that God is NOT good (sin) [Genesis 3:6-13]

Believing the lie brings the Kingdom of Darkness into the world (the effects of sin) [Genesis 3:14-24]

Believing the lie separates you and me (from God, from each other, from creation) [Romans 3:23]

Act III: Redemption: (restoration through sacrifice)

Jesus is God [Hebrews 1:2-3; John 1:1-5]

Jesus enters the world as a human [John 1:14; Luke 2:1-20]

Jesus brings the Kingdom of God to the world [Mark 1:14-15; Mark 4:30-32]

Jesus breaks the lie and separation (Crucifixion) [John 3:16; Mark 15:33-39; Romans 5:8] Jesus defeats the power of sin and death (Resurrection) [Mark 16:1-7; Romans 6:23]

Act IV: Reclaiming:

Creation reinstated: remember, God created you and me to do Good [Ephesians 2:10]

Jesus tells his friends to partner with the Kingdom of God (and undo the works of darkness) [1 John 3:8]

Jesus tells his friends to help break the Lie about God (and make disciples) [Matthew 28:19-20]

The Holy Spirit lives inside of you and me to be Good and do Good [John 14:15-17; Acts 2:1-4;

Galatians 5:22-23]

How are you partnering with Jesus today? [Matthew 16:24-25; John 10:10]

In *A Creative Minority*, Jon Tyson lays out four questions that serve to beautifully frame the Full Gospel:

Where did I come from?

What went wrong?

How do we fix it?

What is my purpose?

If we take the above four acts of the Full Gospel and set them with these questions, then it helps to create a fuller and more complete story.

It is important to note that in our first pass at the Gospel, we try to make things a little simpler by leaving out certain parts of the meta-narrative of scripture. For instance, we do not talk about the role of Israel in the Old Testament. We do not dive deep in the law or the sacrifice system. These things are important, but can be overwhelming the first time around.

Act I: Creation

In the beginning God created the heavens and earth. [Genesis 1:1]

Most people do not understand God. And most people assume various things about Him out of this lack of understanding. Things such as: God is distant and God doesn't care. And these assumptions lead to various misunderstandings, like, "How can you say that God is so good if there's so much suffering in the world?" Or, "If God loves me so much, why was I dealt this hand?" Most people do not understand God, because they do not understand how He created everything, and we need to start at this point, because it gives us a full picture of not only God's nature but also His intent, His feelings towards us and the world, and His purpose for us. If we do not start from the beginning, it is no different than hearing the punch line to a joke while missing the set-up for the joke. Or stepping into a movie theater twenty minutes late, and missing the entire lay-up for the story. In the beginning, God's original design, His original intent, was that God created everything, and He created everything good.

Not evil. Not bad. Not even mediocre. Everything was good. And there is a misconception about what good actually means, but the way that God defines good is like this: perfect harmony in every sense of the way. Zero suffering. No lack of resources. No fractions in relationships. No death. All the things we worry about or weep over today were non-issues. And when God made people, man and woman, it was the first time that He described something as very good, and we were the pinnacle of His creation because we were made in His image, which means that we were designed to play a role in His creation unlike anything else - to dream and create culture around us, and cultivate and steward the

world in such a way that brings life and health all around. Being made in God's very own image means that we were also meant to have perfect relationship with Him. You see, God was never distant; He walked right in the midst of people, talked to them, and they saw him face to face and interacted intimately with God. And out of this intimacy and relationship, we also had perfect relationship with each other. Think about this: no anger, no jealousy, no broken families. This part of the story is crucial, because it lays up the disciple's understanding of God, the original design for creation, and our identity as sons and daughters of God. Here are some key examples of why it is important to start at this part. If a disciple does not understand that God created the world good, he/she tends to struggle with the misconception that God created a world with so much suffering. If people do not understand that God originally created us good, they will see themselves as bad. There is a huge difference between seeing yourself as someone created good with a sin problem versus seeing yourself as someone who was created bad. In both cases, we are helpless to save ourselves, but one case creates a sense of worth and an accurate picture of how God sees us. We tend to emphasize four key parts of the creation story:

God created the world good.

God created man and woman in His own image.

We were created to be in relationship with God.

God gave us a specific role and authority in the world.

Act II: Rebellion

Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?' [Genesis 3:1]

Everyone longs for the world that was just described, but we all know that such a world does not exist today. Everyone of us has experienced suffering, broken relationships, and a sense that something is not quite right. This begs the question, "What went wrong?" Most of us would think that the Bible tells us that the problem started with inside of us or within human beings in general, but that could not be farther from the truth. The problem started in heaven. God not only created the heavens and the earth, but He also created angels to serve His purposes. One of those angels named Lucifer, which in Latin means "the Morning Star" (Isaiah 14:12), was given a prominent place in heaven. But that was not enough for Lucifer. He desired to be equal with God and that desire caused him to lead a rebellion against God in heaven where one third of the angels sided with him. The rebellion failed and Lucifer and his angels were thrown out of heaven. The next place we find Lucifer in is the earth, deceiving man and woman. It is important to understand that Lucifer had no authority over humankind and could not attack or overpower them. The only weapon he had was to lie to them. He caused them to question God's character and instructions, which ultimately led to man choosing to go against God and believing that God was not good and was, in fact, withholding good from them. Sin then came into the world and separated us from God. We lost our position of authority, and the world came under the control of Lucifer, more commonly known as the satan, or the Adversary. Creation itself was affected as suffering, pain and death became a reality. From that point forward, all of us are born into this reality. The worst part about this story is that there was nothing humankind could do to make this right. By teaching the disciple this part of the story, he/she understands the following things: The satan and God are not equals. God created the angels. He has infinite power and authority, while the angels' power and authority are limited. The satan had no authority over us until we chose to side with him and sin against God. In essence, we forfeited our God-given dominion and authority to the satan and are now enslaved in the kingdom of darkness. There is nothing we can do to make this right on our own power.

Act III: Redemption

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. [John 3:16]

Most people do not understand Jesus because most people do not understand the state of the world which Jesus stepped into, how dire the situation was, how far and distant we had become from God and we could not find our way back - we could not find a way to love one another, we could not find a way to get rid of the suffering and disease and depression and death in the world, and how we searched and longed for more. We begin to ask, "How can God just sit back and do nothing?"

The good news, or the Gospel, is that God did not just sit back and do nothing. Jesus is God's plan to redeem everything, to restore all the things that went wrong, all the ways we believe the satan's lies and distortions, all the broken and oppressed places in the world around us. Jesus stepped into the scene to take back all the things that the satan stole. When Jesus came, He announced the Kingdom of God, the restoration of all things, and He broke into our story to make a way for us where we could not make for ourselves. You see, Jesus was not just a good teacher. He had authority like no other - the power to heal all brokenness, the ability to interact with people in such an intimate way that it satisfied their souls and rid them of their deepest longings and sufferings. But, Jesus did not come to be a healer or a counselor. Jesus stepped into our story to break the grip sin had over us and our partnership in the kingdom of darkness. Most of us do not understand that death is the only thing that can cancel the effect or consequence of sin, not making better decisions or doing a list of things to make up for the wrong we have done. And Jesus did not sit back and do nothing. He laid down His life and paid the price for our sins. When Jesus died on the cross, He took our place and died so that we might live.

This would be amazing in and of itself, but it does not stop there. Jesus not only died on the cross, but three days later, He rose from the grave, proving that He had conquered death. Because of Jesus, we know that death is not the end for us. When we choose to put our faith in Jesus and become part of His Kingdom, we will have the same fate when we die. Our lives are wrapped up in His life, and death is no longer our end. We are restored back into a place of goodness and wholeness and a perfect relationship with God Himself.

Act IV: Reclaiming

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 28:19-20]

Most Christians end with Act III. Jesus has conquered death and now we are waiting for Him to come back. The only problem with this is the fact that it is the exact opposite of what Jesus told us to do. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus tells us to go into all the world and to make disciples of all nations. In other words, Jesus tells us that we once again have a critical role to play in God's plan. On top of that, at the beginning of verse 18, Jesus tells us that all authority in heaven AND on earth has been given to Him.

When Jesus defeated death, He also recovered the authority that we lost. Jesus is now in the process of restoring us back to our original design and restoring our original authority. God created you and me on purpose and with purpose. He gave us specific gifts, specific abilities, and specific passions. He fashioned you with such intention that when you figure out whom God created you to be, you are never going to want to be anyone else. You do not have to be like me, and I do not have to be like you.

And when you become you, you are going to change the world around you. In your own specific way, you are going to help Jesus in restoring the whole world, to help people connect to God, to free people from the clutches of the kingdom of darkness, to set things right again and usher back in generosity, truth, unity, love, and peace. When we become a disciple of Jesus, we join Him in His ministry of destroying works of darkness. It is helpful to use an analogy here from World War II. Many historians say that the day the allied forces stormed Normandy beach was the definitive battle in the entire war.

The Nazi's hold on Europe would begin to diminish from that point forward. In essence, the decisive death blow was dealt to the Axis power on that D-Day. But, here is the thing: even though Normandy was the definitive battle, the Allied forces still had to march across France and the rest of Western Europe to liberate the land from the enemies' hold. It was not until they reached Berlin that the war

was finally over. Although the analogy is not a perfect match, it does help the disciple to understand where we currently find ourselves in God's story. The cross was the same as D-day. It is the beginning for the end for the satan and his kingdom of darkness. But there is still a need for us to go and to liberate those who are still held in his clutches. We have all the power and authority to do so. Our mission is to go and make disciples out of anyone who wants the freedom and life that Jesus has to offer. In doing so, we connect people back to God and advance the Kingdom Of God. Every person is meant to do this in every nation of the world in every aspect of our society. One day, Jesus will return to end this war once and for all. Until that day comes, our role to help advance Jesus' Kingdom, to tell the world the good news about His Kingdom to all people, and to restore things back to their original design.

If the Gospel is the way that we all make progress in the Kingdom, how does this work practically? The Gospel truly has an answer for every hurt and brokenness in our lives, we just have to know it well enough to apply it. When we struggle with identity issues of self-worth, comparison, or being performance oriented, Act I of the Gospel tells us that God created us good, for a particular purpose, and in His image -- before we ever did anything. When we struggle with believing that God loves us and has good plans for our welfare, Act II and III remind us that this is a lie from the enemy that no longer has any power with us. When we question whether God will provide financially for our families or fulfill a long-awaited promise, Act III assures us that the same God who would give up everything in order to save us will surely come through for us and comfort us while we wait. When we are tempted to cruise through life and simply wait to be taken to heaven, Act IV reminds us that we are on a mission and encourages us to look for ways to partner with Jesus wherever we are in order to bring His Kingdom to earth.