

Salem E.C. Church

# BASIC ISSUES OF THE GOSPEL

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## The Basic Issues of the Gospel

Jesus came to this earth “to seek and save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). He was on a rescue mission. He understood that people around him were perishing, and he did everything he could to save them from death. Jesus came to rescue and he calls his followers to be rescuers.

You and I exist to know and love God (see Matt. 22:36,37) and glorify him in all that we do (see 1 Cor. 10:31). We glorify God by building up heavenly treasures (see Matt. 6:20) – by doing things that have eternal significance. Lots of things have eternal significance. But nothing is more eternally significant than leading someone to Jesus.

In 1 Peter 4:15 we find these words. “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” This verse tells us to be prepared – to make the necessary preparations to be spiritual rescuers.

Spiritual rescuing begins with prayer – praying for specific unbelievers we know and love and asking God to use us to reach these people for Jesus. Prayer is a necessary part of preparation. But like faith, prayer without works is dead. We need to pray as if everything depends on God and work as if everything depends on us. God will do his part – we can be sure of that. But we need to do our part. We need to pray AND we need to do certain things. One of the things we need to do is master some information.

To be the spiritual rescuers God wants us to be, we need to know and present the basic issues of the gospel – key facts people need to hear to make an intelligent decision about Christ. Romans 10:17 tells us that “faith comes from hearing.”

The basic issues of the gospel can be presented in four

me. From this day forward, as an expression of my love for you, I will make a sincere effort to follow you, allowing your teachings to shape the way I think and act. Amen.”

You’ve just led someone to Jesus. Praise the Lord! The Bible tells us that there is rejoicing in heaven when someone here on Earth turns to Jesus (see Luke 15:7). Rejoice with those in heaven!

The person you’ve just led to Jesus needs some guidance. Tell the person to write down his/her date of decision and to start praying and reading a modern translation of the Bible. Encourage him/her to connect with a good, Bible-teaching church – Salem Church. Sit with him/her at church, and don’t forget to introduce him/her to some of the members of his new eternal family. As things progress, urge him/her to get more involved, and rescue on!

simple steps. To rescue the lost for Christ we need to memorize this information – not word for word, but the essential content. We need to have this information at our fingertips, and we must be ready to present it the moment God opens doors and hearts.

What are the basic issues of the gospel – the good news about Christ? Here they are.

**First**, unbelievers need to know about GOD’S PLAN – what God wants for us. GOD’S PLAN can be summarized this way: God loves us and he wants us to have a full life on Earth and spend eternity in his presence. This is God’s plan for us; this is what he wants for you and me.

In John 10:10, Jesus says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” In 1 Timothy 2:3,4 we find these words. “This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men [mankind] to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that the Lord doesn’t want “anyone to perish.”

God wants you and me and everyone else to experience a full life (a life of joy) here on this planet, and then God wants us to spend the rest of our life (our life after death) in his peaceful presence. This is God’s plan for us, but we have a problem.

Unbelievers need to know about GOD’S PLAN. They also need to know about OUR PROBLEM. Something prevents us from having what God wants us to have. Something separates us from a life of joy here on Earth and the hope of spending eternity with God. That something is sin.

Given enough time, all of us sin. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” 1 John 1:8 says, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

We’re all sinners. We sin when we willfully disobey God. And Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages or consequence of our sin is death ... spiritual death ...

separation from God.

God has a plan for us, but we have a sin problem. That's the bad news. The good news is that there's a remedy for our problem – GOD'S REMEDY.

The good news is that God has taken the initiative in dealing with our sin. God sent his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on a cross for our sin.

People have come up with all kinds of solutions to the sin problem. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." There's only one solution to the sin problem; there's only one remedy for our sin – GOD'S REMEDY – the cross of Christ.

Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." 1 John 2:1 tells us that Christ's death on the cross was "the atoning sacrifice for our sins." The cross of Christ is GOD'S REMEDY for our sin problem. And as I said earlier, it's the only remedy.

In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Acts 4:12 says, "Salvation is found in no one else [no one other than Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." In 1 John 5:11,12 we find these words. "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

God's solution to the sin problem – GOD'S REMEDY for our sin – is Christ's sacrificial death. Jesus died to give us life – a full life here and now and an eternal life in God's peaceful presence. But not everyone has this life. Each person must do something to get this life – each person has a responsibility. OUR RESPONSIBILITY is to understand who Jesus is, understand what he did for us on the cross, and make a decision to accept him as Savior and Lord.

To accept or receive Jesus you must first have a basic understanding of who Jesus is. Jesus was God incarnate – God in human flesh. Two thousand years ago, God the Son took on a human body and lived for a while among us (see John 1:14). That's why we celebrate Christmas.

To accept or receive Jesus you must also understand what he did for you. Jesus died on a cross to make amends for and take away your sin. He sacrificed his life so that your sin could be forgiven. And then he arose from the dead to prove that he was the promised Savior. That's why we celebrate Easter.

Jesus died so that we could have a full life here on Earth and an awesome life in heaven. And God offers us this eternal life as a free gift (see Rom. 6:23). But like any other gift, God's gift of eternal life isn't ours until we actually accept or receive it. John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who received him [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

How do you receive the gift of eternal life? You receive this gift by making a personal decision; by praying; by telling God that you want to accept Christ. The following is a personal prayer for salvation. If you have a basic understanding of who Jesus is and what he did for you on the cross and you pray this prayer for salvation with a sincere heart, God will forgive your sin and give you eternal life.

[NOTE: If you've shared the basic issues of the gospel with someone and that person wants to make decision to accept Christ, it's best to pray a prayer for salvation and ask the person to repeat the prayer. Typically, the person has not spent too much time praying and/or is too nervous to pray by him/herself. So help the person express his/her desire to accept Christ by asking him/her to pray with you by repeating the following prayer.]

"God, I know I've disobeyed you and I'm sorry for what I've done. I know that I'm a sinner in need of a Savior and I believe that only Jesus can save me. Please forgive me and give me eternal life. Thank you, Jesus, for dying for