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Church of God Mission Academy

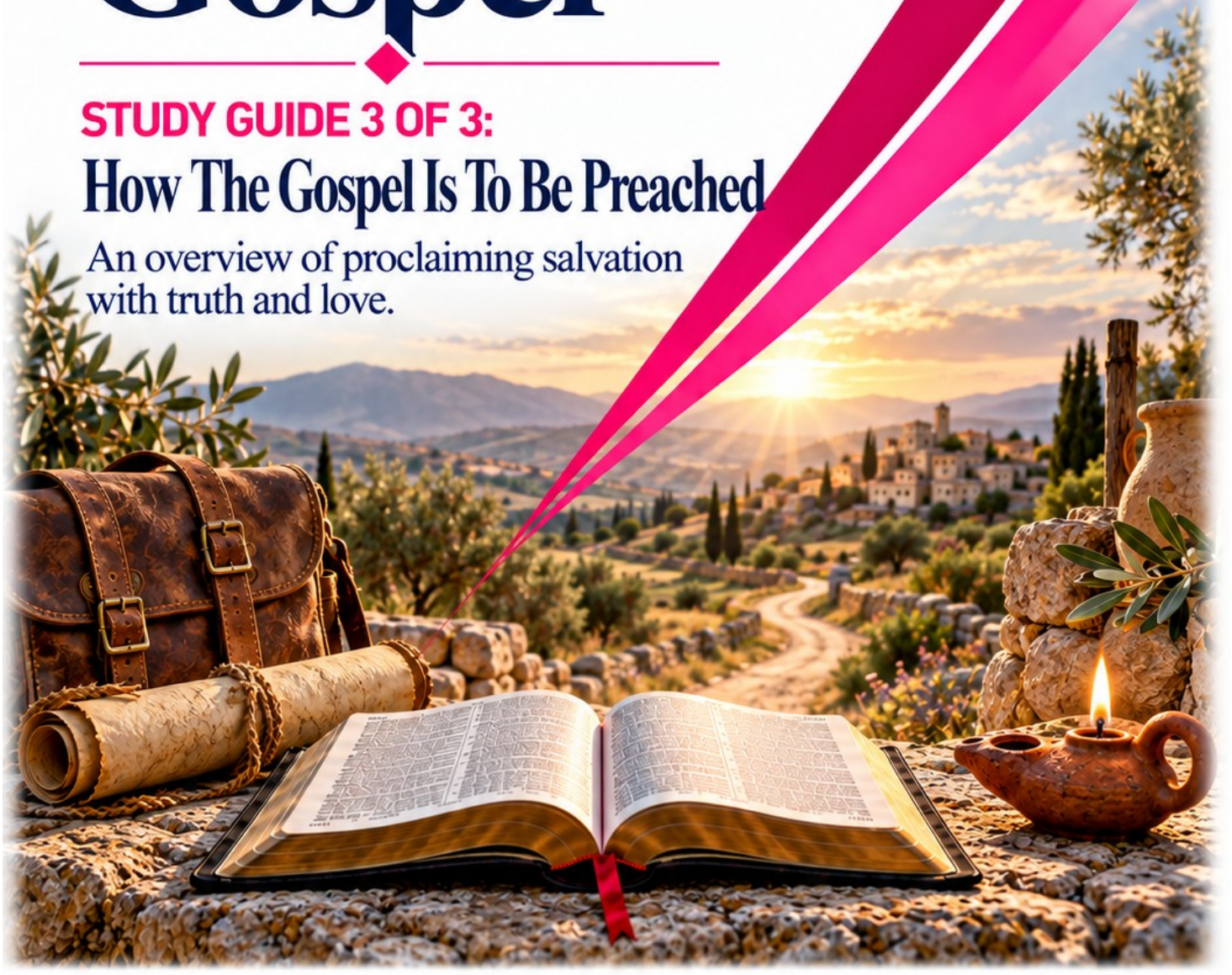
STUDY GUIDE
29
3 OF 3

The *Everlasting* Gospel

STUDY GUIDE 3 OF 3:

How The Gospel Is To Be Preached

An overview of proclaiming salvation with truth and love.



Equipping and empowering for effective service

2 Timothy 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

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Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

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PREFACE

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The everlasting Gospel is not only a message that must be believed. It is a message that must be faithfully proclaimed. Having established that there is one everlasting Gospel and that it is preached to bring people from spiritual death into life, we must now consider how that Gospel is to be ministered.

Paul wrote in **Romans 1:16**:

> *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."*

The saving power does not belong to the personality, skill or forcefulness of the preacher. It belongs to the Gospel of Christ. The messenger must therefore never become the centre of the message. Gospel ministry must bring people to Jesus Christ.

Jesus gave this responsibility to His disciples. He said in **Acts 1:8**:

> *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*

Notice the words, *"witnesses unto me."* The believer is not called to draw attention to himself, a denomination, an organisation or a religious system. The witness points to Jesus Christ.

This witness must also be ministered in the Spirit and love of Christ. At the new birth, Jesus Christ comes to dwell within the believer as Spirit. Gospel ministry is therefore not an outward attempt to copy the manner of Jesus through human effort. His indwelling life must govern the way truth is spoken, the way people are treated and the way the message is carried.

The Gospel does bring judgment. It exposes sin, awakens the conscience and calls people to repentance. But its purpose is not to condemn people without hope. Jesus Christ came to save.

Jesus said in **John 3:17**:

> *"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."*

This gives us the spirit in which the Gospel must be preached. Truth must not be softened, sin must not be excused and repentance must not be removed. Yet the message must always direct the hearer towards the remedy found in Jesus Christ.

The encounter between Jesus and the woman of Samaria gives us a clear picture of this ministry. Jesus crossed barriers, listened, remained focused upon spiritual truth, exposed the reality of her life and offered living water. He did not leave her with condemnation. He brought her to the revelation of who He was.

That is the pattern before us in this Study Guide.

The Gospel that saves must be preached faithfully, clearly and in the Spirit of Christ. It must reveal the true condition of the heart, call the sinner to repentance and point every soul to Jesus Christ.

The messenger bears witness. Jesus Christ saves.

He alone is the way, the truth and the life.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must the Gospel be preached with both faithfulness to truth and the love of Christ?

Personal Reflection

Has your concern to explain doctrine ever overtaken your concern for the person who needs Jesus Christ?

Action Step

Think of a recent Gospel conversation. Examine both what you said and the spirit in which you said it, then name one response that should change.

INTRODUCTION: HOW SHOULD THE GOSPEL THAT SAVES BE PREACHED?

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The Gospel has a definite message, but proclaiming that message involves more than repeating a collection of correct statements. A person may speak about sin, repentance, salvation and Jesus Christ, yet the manner in which those truths are presented can either help the hearer recognise the saving purpose of the Gospel or obscure it beneath human methods.

Jesus commanded His disciples in **Mark 16:15**:

> *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."*

The command is clear: the Gospel must be preached. But Scripture also shows us the character of that ministry. Gospel preaching is not simply the transfer of religious information from one person to another. It is the proclamation of God's saving truth to people who need spiritual life.

Paul expressed the nature of New Covenant ministry in **2 Corinthians 3:5-6**:

> *"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."*

The messenger is not sufficient in himself. Human ability, personality, education or confidence cannot produce spiritual life in another person. Paul says plainly, *"our sufficiency is of God."*

This means that Gospel ministry must never become a mechanical exercise. There is no fixed human formula that can be repeated in exactly the same way to every person as though salvation were produced by following a script. The truth itself does not change, but people are not all reached through identical circumstances, questions or conversations.

Jesus demonstrated this throughout His earthly ministry. He did not speak to every person in the same way. He addressed Nicodemus concerning the new birth, spoke to the woman of Samaria about living water, and confronted religious hypocrisy directly while speaking hope to

those who knew their need. The message remained true, but the ministry reached the condition of the hearer.

Jesus described His ministry in **Luke 4:18**:

> *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,"*

Notice the direction of His ministry: preaching, healing, deliverance, sight and liberty. The Gospel confronts what is wrong, but it does so because God has provided an answer. It reveals bondage because deliverance is available. It exposes darkness because light has come. It awakens the spiritually dead because life is found in Jesus Christ.

This must govern the way the Gospel is preached.

Gospel ministry does not hide sin in order to appear loving. Neither does it make condemnation the centre of the message. The preacher must speak the truth clearly enough for the hearer to recognise the spiritual condition of the heart, while continually directing that person towards the salvation found in Jesus Christ.

Paul described Gospel messengers in **Romans 10:15**:

> *"And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"*

The Gospel is *"glad tidings of good things."* That does not mean the message avoids judgment or repentance. It means that judgment is never separated from the remedy. The sinner is shown the way of death so that he may turn towards the way of life.

The believer who ministers the Gospel must therefore depend upon Jesus Christ within. This is not an outward attempt to reproduce the personality or actions of Jesus through natural effort. The same Christ who saves also dwells within His people as Spirit, and His life must govern their words, attitude, patience, courage and love.

The Gospel is fixed in truth, but its ministry is living.

It is not a human formula.

It is not religious argument.

It is not angry condemnation.

It is the saving truth of Jesus Christ ministered by His Spirit to the human heart.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why is the saving Gospel not a religious script that produces life through the right words?

Personal Reflection

Do you rely more on knowing what to say than on the Spirit of Christ governing how you speak?

Action Step

Before your next spiritual conversation, examine your motive and dependence upon Christ. Consider how you can listen and speak truth without forcing a prepared formula.

THE TRUE GOSPEL AND A DISTORTED GOSPEL

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Not everything called the Gospel is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The New Testament warns plainly that the saving message can be altered until what remains still carries Christian language but no longer declares the truth that Jesus Christ came to accomplish.

Paul confronted this problem directly among the Galatian believers. Paul wrote in **Galatians 1:6-9**:

> *"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."*

Paul uses strong language because changing the Gospel is not a small matter. He speaks of those who would *"pervert the gospel of Christ."* To pervert something is to turn it away from what it was intended to be. The true Gospel must therefore be measured by what Scripture says that Jesus Christ came to accomplish.

The Gospel Has Power to Save

Paul wrote in **Romans 1:16**:

> *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."*

The Gospel is *"the power of God unto salvation."* A message that leaves people spiritually dead while assuring them that nothing fundamental needs to change has lost the saving purpose of the Gospel.

Jesus Christ did not come simply to give people a new religious identity. He came to save. Matthew wrote in **Matthew 1:21**:

> *"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."*

Notice the words *"from their sins."* Jesus saves people from sin. The Gospel must never be changed into a message that makes peace with the very condition from which Jesus came to deliver.

This does not mean that salvation is produced by human discipline or self-improvement. Freedom from sin is not achieved by a person becoming stronger in himself. Salvation is the work of Jesus Christ.

Grace Does Not Preserve the Old Life

A distorted Gospel can speak much about grace while changing what grace actually accomplishes. Grace is not permission to remain governed by sin.

Paul asked in **Romans 6:1-2**:

> *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"*

Paul does not present grace as protection for continuing sin. He says, *"God forbid."*

Later in the same chapter he wrote in **Romans 6:22**:

> *"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."*

The language is definite: *"made free from sin."* This is the Gospel result that must remain clear. Jesus Christ forgives, but salvation does not end with forgiveness while leaving the person under the same spiritual dominion. He brings the believer into new life.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does a distorted Gospel misrepresent freedom from sin and the saving purpose of Jesus Christ?

Personal Reflection

Have you accepted a message about grace that leaves a person comfortable with the old life?

Action Step

Compare the message with **Romans 6:1–2** *and 6:22. Identify what it omits and decide how your own belief or witness should change.*

The Gospel Must Agree With the Purpose of Jesus Christ

John gives another direct statement of why Jesus Christ was manifested. John wrote in **1 John 3:8**:

> *"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."*

The Gospel cannot faithfully proclaim Jesus Christ while denying the purpose for which He was manifested. He came to *"destroy the works of the devil."* A message that teaches people to accept continuing bondage as the normal result of salvation weakens what Scripture says Jesus came to accomplish.

The true Gospel points to deliverance, new birth and spiritual life in Jesus Christ.

Salvation Brings a New Life

The Gospel does not tell the sinner to repair the old life until it becomes acceptable to God. Jesus Christ gives new life.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:17**:

> *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

This is not outward religious improvement. The believer becomes *"a new creature."*

At the new birth, Jesus Christ comes to dwell within the believer as Spirit. The Christian life therefore does not depend upon the believer attempting to overcome sin through natural strength. His indwelling life becomes the source of holiness, obedience and spiritual strength.

A distorted Gospel either lowers God's standard so that sin can remain, or places the burden upon human effort to produce righteousness. The true Gospel does neither. It exposes sin according to the Word of God, calls the sinner to repentance, and brings the believer to Jesus Christ, who gives new life.

The Word of God Determines the Gospel

Religious tradition cannot define the Gospel. Personal experience cannot define it. Popular teaching cannot define it. The Word of God remains the standard.

Paul did not tell the Galatians to choose whichever Gospel seemed most comforting or widely accepted. He warned them against departing from the Gospel they had received.

The true Gospel agrees with the saving purpose of Jesus Christ. He came to save His people from their sins. He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. Through Him, those who were spiritually dead are made alive, those who were under the dominion of sin are made free from sin, and those who are born again receive Jesus Christ within.

That is the Gospel that saves.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must the Word of God rather than the appeal of a messenger determine whether the Gospel is true?

Personal Reflection

Have you trusted an impressive preacher more readily than you have examined what that person teaches?

Action Step

Choose one claim you have accepted because of the speaker. Check it in the Bible and explain what you will believe when personality and God's Word differ.

THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION

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The Gospel does not depend upon human ability to make it effective. Its power is not created by the preacher, the method used, the emotion of the moment or the strength of an

argument. Paul identifies the source of its power plainly: the Gospel of Christ is *"the power of God unto salvation."*

Paul wrote in **Romans 1:16**:

> *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."*

Paul does not say that the Gospel contains a little divine power or that it becomes powerful when it is presented skilfully. He says that it *"is the power of God unto salvation."* The message carries the truth by which God confronts the heart, reveals the need for salvation and directs the hearer to Jesus Christ.

The Power Belongs to God

This protects Gospel ministry from becoming centred upon the ability of the messenger. A preacher may speak clearly, reason carefully and communicate with confidence, but none of those things can create spiritual life. Human persuasion can influence the mind, but only God can awaken the spiritually dead and bring them into life.

The messenger therefore has no reason to trust in personality, force, cleverness or technique. The Gospel does not become more powerful because the preacher becomes more impressive. Its power rests in God and in the saving reality found in Jesus Christ.

This is why the Gospel must not be reduced to a tract, a memorised presentation or a religious formula. Such things may contain true statements, but salvation is not produced by completing a sequence of words. The Gospel directs the hearer to a Person.

Jesus said in **John 14:6**:

> *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

The way is Jesus Christ. The truth is Jesus Christ. The life is Jesus Christ. Gospel preaching therefore succeeds when it faithfully brings the hearer to Him.

Christ Is the Power of God

Paul makes this connection even clearer when he speaks about Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 1:23-24**:

> *"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."*

Notice that Paul does not separate the power of the Gospel from the Person being proclaimed. He says, *"Christ the power of God."*

The Gospel is powerful because Jesus Christ is its saving reality. A message may contain many correct facts, but if it directs confidence towards human effort, religious ceremony, an organisation or another spiritual experience, it has moved away from the One in whom saving power is found. The Gospel must therefore bring Jesus Christ clearly before the hearer.

The Gospel Brings a Person to the Place of Response

Romans 1:16 also says that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation *"to every one that believeth."* The power of the Gospel does not mean that every person who hears is automatically saved. The Gospel brings truth to the heart and calls for a response of faith.

The hearer must respond to what God makes known. The Gospel exposes the condition of the life, brings conviction to the conscience and calls the sinner to turn towards Jesus Christ. It does not force salvation upon the unwilling, but it does make the way of salvation known.

This is why true Gospel preaching cannot be satisfied with producing an emotional moment. Emotion may accompany conviction, but emotion itself is not the new birth. Agreement with the preacher is not the new birth. Joining a religious group is not the new birth.

The saving purpose is that the spiritually dead should receive life in Jesus Christ.

Divine Power Is Not Human Pressure

Because the Gospel is the power of God, the messenger must not confuse spiritual power with human pressure. Raising the voice, creating fear or forcing an immediate response cannot produce the work that belongs to God. The Word must be spoken faithfully, and the hearer must be given the truth by which the conscience is brought before God.

The preacher does not manufacture conviction. God works through His truth.

The Power of God Produces Spiritual Life

Human effort cannot produce that life. The natural person cannot create spiritual birth through self-discipline, education or determination. Salvation requires the work of God.

At the new birth, Jesus Christ comes to dwell within the believer as Spirit. The person is not simply persuaded to begin living differently while remaining spiritually unchanged. He receives new life.

This is why the Gospel is more than instruction about how to become a better person. It carries the truth that brings the sinner face to face with Jesus Christ, the One who saves, makes alive and dwells within those who are born again.

The Gospel therefore does not point people towards the strength of the preacher or towards the strength of themselves. It points them towards Jesus Christ.

The messenger speaks the truth. The hearer must respond. But the saving power belongs to God.

The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation because Jesus Christ Himself is the power and reality of the message.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does the saving power of the Gospel belong to God and not to the messenger?

Personal Reflection

When you speak of salvation, do you become anxious to persuade someone through your own ability?

Action Step

Recall a conversation where you felt responsible for another person's response. Examine that burden, and consider how to witness faithfully while leaving the work of giving life to Christ.

YE SHALL BE WITNESSES UNTO ME

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Jesus did not leave His disciples uncertain about the purpose of Gospel ministry. Before Pentecost, He told them that they would receive power when the Holy Ghost came and that this power would make them witnesses unto Him. The emphasis was not upon building a religious movement or drawing attention to themselves. Their witness was to centre upon Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in **Acts 1:8**:

> *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*

Notice the expression: *"ye shall be witnesses unto me."*

A witness tells what he knows concerning another person. The disciples were not sent to make themselves the message. They were sent to testify concerning Jesus Christ.

The Witness Points to Jesus Christ

True Gospel ministry always directs attention towards Jesus Christ. The messenger may explain Scripture, answer questions, expose sin and call for repentance, but he must never become the centre of the hearer's confidence.

The Church does not save. The preacher does not save. A religious organisation does not save.

Jesus Christ saves.

The purpose of the witness is therefore to bring the hearer to the One who is the way, the truth and the life. This protects Gospel ministry from becoming centred upon personalities.

A gifted speaker may attract attention, but attracting people to a preacher is not the same as bringing people to Jesus Christ. The true witness continually moves attention away from himself and towards the Saviour.

The Power of the Witness Is the Holy Ghost

Jesus also told the disciples: *"ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."*

This promise was fulfilled at Pentecost. The disciples did not possess the fulfilled New Covenant indwelling before that day. At Pentecost Jesus Christ came as Spirit to dwell within His people, and the Gospel Day began.

For believers living in the Gospel Day, the Holy Ghost is not a later experience added after salvation. At the new birth, the believer receives the Spirit of Christ and is brought into the body of Christ.

The power for witnessing therefore comes from Christ within.

Paul wrote in **Romans 8:9**:

> *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ. The believer who belongs to Christ possesses His Spirit, and Gospel witness must flow from that indwelling life.

Witnessing Is More Than Repeating Words

A person can memorise Gospel verses and still depend upon natural ability. He may know how to begin a conversation, what questions to ask and which Scriptures to quote. Those things may be useful, but they are not the source of spiritual power.

Gospel witness is not produced by a formula. The witness speaks truth, but Christ must deal with the heart.

This is why the messenger must remain dependent upon the Spirit of Christ within. Different people come with different backgrounds, questions, fears and levels of understanding. The truth remains unchanged, but the way that truth is brought to an individual must not be reduced to mechanical repetition.

Jesus Himself did not minister to everyone in exactly the same way. His message remained true, but He addressed people according to the condition before Him.

The Witness Must Be Faithful to the Message

Dependence upon the Spirit does not mean that the message becomes uncertain or changes according to circumstances. The Spirit of Christ will never lead a believer away from the Word of God.

The witness must still speak the truth about sin, call people to repentance, proclaim the new birth and direct the hearer to Jesus Christ. Being led by the Spirit is not an excuse for avoiding difficult truth.

It means that the truth is ministered under the government of Christ within rather than through natural force, anger or self-confidence.

From Jerusalem to the Uttermost Part of the Earth

Jesus told the disciples that their witness would extend *"both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*

The Gospel was never intended to remain within one people or one geographical place. Its reach was outward: Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth.

This agrees with the everlasting Gospel of Revelation, which goes to every nation, kindred, tongue and people. The witness of Jesus Christ crosses national, cultural and social boundaries because there is one Saviour for all people.

The Witness Does Not Replace the Saviour

There is an important distinction between the witness and the One being witnessed about. The believer can speak, testify and explain what Jesus Christ has done, but the believer cannot give another person spiritual life.

Only Jesus Christ can do that.

The task of the witness is therefore both important and limited. We must faithfully proclaim the truth, but we must never assume the place that belongs to Jesus Christ alone.

The messenger bears witness. Christ reveals Himself through His Word. The hearer must respond. Jesus Christ gives life.

This is the meaning of Christ's command: *"Ye shall be witnesses unto me."*

The true Gospel witness does not draw people to the messenger.

It points every soul to Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does it mean for believers to be witnesses unto Jesus Christ rather than promoters of themselves?

Personal Reflection

Have you sought recognition for your testimony, teaching or ministry instead of directing attention to the Saviour?

Action Step

Review one way you speak about faith. Remove any unnecessary focus upon yourself and prepare a clear statement that directs the hearer to Jesus Christ.

THE GOSPEL MUST BE MINISTERED IN THE LOVE OF GOD

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The Gospel contains truth that must never be softened, but the spirit in which that truth is ministered also matters. Scripture does not give the believer permission to speak truth with anger, pride or contempt towards the sinner. The Gospel must be ministered through the love of God that Jesus Christ places within those who are born again.

Paul wrote in **Romans 5:5**:

> *"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."*

Paul does not describe this love as something the believer produces through natural kindness. He says that *"the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost."* At the new birth, the believer receives the Spirit of Christ. The love expressed through Gospel ministry must therefore flow from Christ dwelling within.

The Love of God Is More Than Human Emotion

The New Testament word AGAPE describes a love that goes beyond changing feelings and personal preference. Human affection may be stronger towards some people than others, but the love of God seeks what is spiritually best for the person before us.

This love does not mean approving everything another person does. It does not ignore sin or remove the call to repentance. True love speaks truth because it desires salvation rather than destruction.

Paul gives us the clearest demonstration of this love in **Romans 5:8**:

> *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*

God did not wait until sinners had made themselves worthy of love. His love was demonstrated *"while we were yet sinners."* That gives Gospel ministry its proper direction. We do not love people because they have already changed. We minister the Gospel because they need Jesus Christ.

Love Seeks the Good of the Other Person

The love of God places the spiritual need of another person ahead of personal irritation, resentment or offence. A sinner may reject the message, ask difficult questions, misunderstand Scripture or even speak against the believer. None of those things changes the responsibility to minister in the Spirit of Christ.

Jesus said in **Matthew 5:43-44**:

> *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"*

This kind of love cannot depend upon the response of the other person. Jesus commands love even towards those who oppose, curse and persecute. Gospel ministry therefore cannot be governed by whether the hearer treats us well.

The believer is not witnessing in order to win an argument or defend personal pride. The purpose is to bring the truth of Jesus Christ before a soul who needs salvation.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must the love of God govern Gospel ministry even when the hearer is difficult or resistant?

Personal Reflection

Whose resistance or disagreement has tempted you to become impatient, proud or harsh?

Action Step

Consider your attitude towards that person before Christ. Choose one truthful and respectful response that places their spiritual need ahead of winning an argument.

Love Does Not Remove Truth

There is a false idea of love that refuses to identify sin because doing so may make someone uncomfortable. That is not the love revealed in Scripture.

If a person is spiritually dead, love does not pretend that he is alive. If sin has separated someone from God, love does not hide that condition. If repentance is necessary, love does not remove repentance from the message.

The Gospel judges the life according to the flesh because the sinner must recognise the condition from which Jesus Christ came to save. But the purpose of that judgment is life.

Love therefore tells the truth while continually directing the hearer towards the remedy. The Gospel says, in effect: this is the condition; this is where sin leads; but Jesus Christ has come to save.

Love Must Be Seen in Action

John makes clear that love cannot remain only in words.

John wrote in **1 John 3:18**:

> *"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."*

It is possible to speak about loving sinners while treating them with impatience, superiority or harshness. John does not allow love to remain a religious claim. It must be expressed *"in deed and in truth."*

The manner in which we listen matters. The patience we show matters. The way we answer questions matters. The willingness to continue caring when someone does not immediately understand matters.

None of these replaces truth. They demonstrate the spirit in which truth is being ministered.

Christ Within Is the Source of This Love

The believer is not called to manufacture the love of Jesus through external imitation. The Christian life does not consist of studying how Jesus behaved and then attempting to reproduce His character through natural strength.

Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer as Spirit. His indwelling life is the source.

This is why Gospel ministry must remain connected to the believer's own walk with Christ. If the messenger gives place to anger, pride, bitterness or the desire to prove himself right, the manner of ministry can obscure the very Saviour being proclaimed.

Paul identifies Jesus Christ Himself with the power of God. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 1:24**:

> *"But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."*

The same Christ who is the power of God unto salvation is the Christ who dwells within His people. Gospel ministry must therefore express His life rather than the natural reactions of the flesh.

Love and Judgment Work Together

There is no contradiction between love and biblical judgment. Love does not say that sin is harmless, and judgment does not require anger towards the sinner.

The Gospel brings the Word of God to the conscience so that a person may recognise spiritual death, repent and receive life. That is an act of love because the purpose is salvation.

A doctor does not show kindness by hiding a serious condition from a patient. In the same way, Gospel love does not conceal spiritual danger. But neither does the doctor give a diagnosis without seeking a remedy. The Gospel reveals the condition and brings the hearer to Jesus Christ.

The Love of God Must Govern the Messenger

The believer who carries the Gospel must therefore remain under the government of Christ within. The message is not ours to change, and the people hearing it are not ours to condemn.

We speak the truth because we love. We call for repentance because we love. We warn of spiritual death because we love. And we point people to Jesus Christ because He alone can give them life.

The Gospel that saves must be ministered in the love of God.

Truth must remain truth, but the life carrying that truth must be the life of Jesus Christ within.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can the Gospel bring necessary correction without making the messenger's anger part of the message?

Personal Reflection

When you correct someone, what usually governs your tone: concern for their good or frustration at their error?

Action Step

Identify one difficult truth you may need to speak. Examine your motive first, and decide how Christ's love within should govern the manner of your words.

JESUS CAME TO SAVE, NOT TO CONDEMN

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The Gospel must be preached with a clear understanding of why Jesus Christ came. He did not enter the world to leave sinners under hopeless condemnation. He came to save. This means that the purpose of the Gospel is to bring the sinner to the One who provides deliverance.

Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 1:15**:

> *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."*

Paul does not leave the purpose uncertain. Jesus Christ came into the world *"to save sinners."* The sinner needs to recognise his condition, but the message must never stop at the condition. The Gospel brings the hearer to the Saviour.

The World Was Already Under Condemnation

Jesus explained this clearly when speaking about why He came into the world.

Jesus said in **John 3:16-18**:

> *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*

These verses must be kept together. Jesus says that He did not come into the world to condemn the world, because the unbelieving world was already condemned. Sin had already separated people from God. The need already existed.

Jesus came with the remedy.

The Gospel therefore does not create the sinner's condemnation. It reveals the condition that already exists and directs the sinner towards salvation in Jesus Christ.

God's Love Sent the Saviour

John begins this passage with one of the clearest statements of God's love:

"For God so loved the world."

The giving of Jesus Christ was the expression of that love. God did not love sin, but He loved those who were lost in sin and provided the way of salvation.

This is why Gospel preaching must never make anger towards the sinner its controlling spirit. The messenger may need to speak strongly about sin, judgment and repentance, but the purpose is not to make the sinner feel that there is no hope. The purpose is to show that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

Paul makes the same point in **Romans 5:8**:

> *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*

God demonstrated His love while people were still sinners. He did not wait until they had first made themselves acceptable. The Gospel carries that same saving purpose.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does **John 3:16–18** *reveal salvation, rather than hopeless condemnation, as the purpose of Christ's coming?*

Personal Reflection

Have you viewed people who are lost mainly through their wrong behaviour rather than through their need for the Saviour?

Action Step

Think of someone you have judged harshly. Examine that attitude and consider how God's love should change the way you regard and speak to them.

Jesus Brought Hope to Those Who Needed Deliverance

The ministry of Jesus repeatedly showed that He came to bring life, healing and deliverance.

Jesus said in **John 12:47**:

> *"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."*

Again, the purpose is unmistakable: *"to save the world."*

This does not remove personal responsibility. Jesus still called people to repent, believe and obey. He exposed hypocrisy and confronted sin directly. But His saving mission must govern how we understand the Gospel.

The lost do not need a message that only tells them they are lost. They need to know where salvation is found.

The Word Brings Healing and Deliverance

The Psalmist gives us language that beautifully expresses the saving direction of God's Word.

Psalm 107:20 says:

> *"He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions."*

God sent His Word, and the result was healing and deliverance. The Gospel does not hide the destruction caused by sin, but neither does it leave people imprisoned beneath it.

Jesus Christ is the answer.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 2:24**:

> *"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."*

Notice again the movement. Jesus bore our sins so that we should be *"dead to sins"* and *"live unto righteousness."* The Gospel does not announce forgiveness while leaving the sinner unchanged. It proclaims deliverance from the old condition and life unto righteousness through Jesus Christ.

Condemnation Is Not the Method of Salvation

A sinner may already carry guilt, shame, fear and the knowledge that something is wrong. Adding human anger does not create salvation. The Gospel must bring the judgment of God's Word, but human condemnation must not be confused with biblical conviction.

Conviction brings the truth to the conscience. Condemnation without hope leaves a person beneath the weight of the problem. The Gospel brings both truth and the answer.

The preacher does not need to exaggerate the sinner's condition or attempt to produce guilt through emotional pressure. The Word of God is sufficient to reveal what is wrong. The responsibility of the messenger is to speak that Word faithfully and point the hearer towards Jesus Christ.

Jesus Did Confront Religious Hypocrisy

The fact that Jesus came to save does not mean that He never spoke severe words. He confronted religious leaders who hid spiritual death beneath outward religion and who hindered others from entering the kingdom of God.

His strongest rebukes were not evidence that the Gospel was a message of uncontrolled anger. They exposed hypocrisy that stood between people and truth. This distinction matters because Gospel preaching must not treat the broken sinner and the hardened religious hypocrite as though they are in the same condition of understanding and resistance.

Jesus always dealt truthfully with the heart before Him.

Salvation Is the Purpose

When the Gospel exposes sin, awakens the conscience, calls for repentance or warns of spiritual death, the purpose is salvation.

The destination is not condemnation. The destination is Jesus Christ.

This is why Gospel ministry must carry both seriousness and hope. Sin is serious because it separates from God. Repentance is necessary because the sinner must turn. But Jesus Christ has come, and salvation is available.

The Gospel does not say, *"There is no hope for you."* It says, *"You need salvation, and Jesus Christ has come to save."*

Jesus came not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

That saving purpose must govern every faithful proclamation of the Gospel.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must Gospel preaching confront sin while still directing the hearer towards the hope found in Jesus Christ?

Personal Reflection

Have you avoided identifying sin, or have you spoken about it without offering the hope of salvation?

Action Step

Recall one conversation where you leaned too far in either direction. Explain how you could present both the need and the remedy with truth and compassion.

THE GOSPEL REVEALS THE CONDITION AND BRINGS THE REMEDY

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The Gospel does not leave a person unaware of his spiritual condition. It brings the light of God's Word to the heart and shows what sin has done. But the Gospel never reveals the problem without also directing the hearer to the remedy found in Jesus Christ.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 4:6**:

> *"For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."*

Peter joins judgment and life in the same purpose. The life according to the flesh is brought under the judgment of God's Word so that the spiritually dead may turn and live according to God in the Spirit.

The Gospel Brings the True Condition Into the Light

A person can be physically alive, active and religious while still being separated from God. The Gospel reaches beneath outward appearance and brings the spiritual condition into the light.

Jesus said in **John 3:19-21**:

> *"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."*

Light reveals what darkness conceals. The Gospel therefore does not flatter the hearer or allow spiritual death to remain hidden beneath good intentions, religious activity or human respectability. The Word exposes what must be faced before God.

Judgment Is Not the End of the Message

When the Gospel judges the life according to the flesh, the purpose is not to leave the sinner beneath hopeless condemnation. The judgment of the Gospel brings the person to the place where the need for salvation becomes clear.

A person who does not recognise separation from God will not understand the need to be reconciled to Him. This is why truth must come before comfort. The Gospel identifies sin because sin separates from God, awakens the conscience because repentance requires recognition of what is wrong, and brings the hearer face to face with the condition of the heart so that the person may turn towards Jesus Christ.

The Remedy Is Jesus Christ

The Gospel does not tell the sinner to repair himself. It directs him to the One who saves.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 2:24**:

> *"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."*

Peter describes both the problem and the remedy. Jesus Christ bore our sins so that we should be *"dead to sins"* and *"live unto righteousness."* The healing is not produced by human effort. It is found in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel therefore brings the hearer beyond the diagnosis. Spiritual death does not have to remain the final condition. Separation from God can be replaced by life in Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must the Gospel reveal a person's true condition and also proclaim the remedy in Jesus Christ?

Personal Reflection

When you speak with someone in spiritual need, are you more inclined to diagnose their problems than to direct them to Christ?

Action Step

Identify a way you can speak about spiritual need without humiliating the hearer. Consider how the conversation can lead clearly to Jesus Christ.

The Word Reveals and Delivers

The Psalmist describes the work of God's Word in the same way.

Psalm 107:20 says:

> *"He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions."*

God sends His Word, and that Word brings healing and deliverance. The Gospel exposes destruction because God intends to deliver from it.

This gives the messenger an important responsibility. We must not hide the condition, but neither must we make the condition the centre of the message. The centre is Jesus Christ.

Sin is exposed so that the sinner may repent. Spiritual death is revealed so that the hearer may receive life. Bondage is identified so that deliverance may be received.

The Conscience Must Be Awakened

The Gospel works upon the conscience because the hearer must personally respond to God. The preacher cannot repent for another person, believe for another person or receive the new birth for another person.

When the conscience is awakened, the person begins to see the difference between the life being lived and the truth of God's Word. That recognition is an essential part of the turning that leads to repentance. The Gospel then directs the awakened heart towards Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Does Not Leave People Where It Finds Them

A Gospel that only makes people aware of sin but gives no clear way of salvation has stopped before reaching its purpose. A message that speaks only of love while refusing to reveal sin has also failed to bring the whole truth.

The Gospel does both. It reveals the condition and brings the remedy. It judges the life according to the flesh, calls the sinner to repentance and points to Jesus Christ. Through the new birth, Jesus Christ brings the spiritually dead into life.

At the new birth, the believer receives the Spirit of Christ. Jesus Christ comes to dwell within, and His indwelling life becomes the source of the new life that the Gospel has proclaimed.

The Gospel reveals what sin has done, but it also declares what Jesus Christ has done. It brings the sinner into the light so that the sinner may turn from darkness, and it exposes spiritual death so that life may be received.

The condition is real.

The remedy is greater. The remedy is Jesus Christ.

No Condemnation in Christ

The Gospel does not only reveal condemnation. Through Jesus Christ, the believer is brought out from under it.

Paul wrote in **Romans 8:1**:

> *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."*

At the new birth, Jesus Christ comes to dwell within the believer as Spirit. The believer is no longer left beneath the guilt of the old life but is brought into new life in Him.

Walking after the Spirit is not an external attempt to produce Christian life through human determination. It is the indwelling life of Jesus Christ governing the born-again believer.

The Gospel brings the sinner from condemnation into life in Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does freedom from condemnation in Christ reveal about the life received at the new birth?

Personal Reflection

Are you still measuring your standing with God by past failure or outward performance rather than by the life Christ gives?

Action Step

Read Romans 8:1 *in its context. Identify a mistaken basis for your confidence and explain how your thoughts should agree with the indwelling life of Christ.*

MINISTERING IN THE SPIRIT, NOT BY A RIGID FORMULA

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The Gospel itself does not change, but Gospel ministry must never be reduced to a mechanical method. The truth concerning sin, repentance, the new birth and salvation in Jesus Christ remains fixed. Yet people do not all come to the Gospel with the same understanding, questions or circumstances.

Paul explains the character of New Covenant ministry in **2 Corinthians 3:5-6**:

> *"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."*

The messenger is not sufficient in himself. Paul says plainly, *"our sufficiency is of God."* Gospel ministry therefore depends upon God rather than upon a human method.

The Truth Is Fixed

Being led by the Spirit does not mean that truth changes according to the person before us. The Gospel cannot be adjusted to avoid repentance, soften the seriousness of sin or offer another way of salvation.

Jesus Christ remains the only way. The sinner must still recognise the need for salvation. Repentance must still be preached. The new birth must still be necessary, and the Word of God remains the standard.

The Spirit of Christ will never lead the believer contrary to Scripture. Spirit-led ministry is not uncertain ministry. It is the unchanging truth of God ministered under the government of Christ within.

People Are Not All Reached in the Same Way

Although the truth is fixed, the conversation may be different from person to person. One person may already understand that sin has separated him from God. Another may have little understanding of spiritual things. One may be burdened by guilt, while another may be confident in religion and unaware of the need for salvation.

A rigid script cannot recognise these differences. Jesus did not speak to everyone in exactly the same manner. He addressed the condition before Him while remaining completely faithful to truth.

With Nicodemus, He spoke of the new birth. With the woman of Samaria, He spoke of living water. With religious hypocrites, He exposed their outward profession and inward corruption.

The truth did not change. The ministry addressed the heart before Him.

The Letter Killeth, but the Spirit Giveth Life

Paul's words, *"the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life,"* do not mean that written Scripture is harmful or unnecessary. Paul is contrasting ministry that remains only outward with the living work of God by His Spirit.

A person may repeat correct words without understanding the heart of the hearer. He may follow a prepared sequence so closely that he stops listening, stops discerning and begins concentrating more upon completing the presentation than upon the person before him. That is not the purpose of Gospel ministry.

The believer must know the truth well enough to speak it clearly, but dependence must remain upon Jesus Christ within.

The Messenger Must Listen

Faithful witnessing involves more than speaking. It also requires listening. The hearer may reveal through a question, objection or response where the real difficulty lies, and a thoughtful answer may open the way to bring a Scripture that directly addresses that need.

Listening does not mean allowing the conversation to wander endlessly away from the Gospel. The messenger must remain focused upon the saving truth, but careful listening helps us understand how that truth needs to be brought before the person.

The purpose is not to win control of the conversation. The purpose is to bring the hearer to Jesus Christ.

Christ Within Governs the Ministry

Spirit-led Gospel ministry does not mean waiting for unusual feelings or impressions before speaking. The born-again believer already possesses the Spirit of Christ. Jesus Christ dwells within, and His life must govern the believer's words, patience, courage, wisdom and love.

This is not an external attempt to imitate how Jesus once spoke to people. It is the indwelling Christ expressing His life through the believer who remains submitted to His Word.

The messenger therefore does not need to manufacture spiritual power. He must remain faithful to Scripture and yielded to Christ within.

The Message Is Certain, the Method Is Not Mechanical

There is a great difference between having a clear Gospel message and having a rigid Gospel script. The message must be clear, the doctrine definite, the call to repentance unmistakable, and Jesus Christ must remain the centre.

But the believer must also recognise that Gospel ministry involves real people whose hearts and circumstances differ. The Gospel is not a formula that produces salvation when the correct sequence of sentences has been completed.

God saves. The messenger witnesses. The Word brings truth to the conscience. The hearer must respond. Jesus Christ gives life.

That is why New Covenant ministry is *"not of the letter, but of the spirit."*

The truth never changes, but it must be ministered through the living reality of Jesus Christ within.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can a witness keep the unchanging Gospel clear without depending on a rigid method?

Personal Reflection

Do you listen to the person before you, or are you mainly waiting to deliver what you had prepared?

Action Step

In your next opportunity to witness, give genuine attention to the person's questions. Reflect afterwards on whether your words remained faithful to the Gospel and governed by Christ within.

JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

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The encounter between Jesus and the woman of Samaria gives us one of the clearest pictures of Gospel ministry in action. Jesus does not follow a mechanical script. He deals with the person before Him, remains focused upon spiritual truth and brings the conversation steadily towards the revelation of who He is.

This account must not be treated as a rigid formula that every believer must copy step by step. The truth is fixed, but Gospel ministry reaches individuals in different circumstances. What we see in John 4 is the saving purpose of God being brought personally to one woman.

Jesus Crossed a Barrier to Reach Her

John records the beginning of their encounter in **John 4:6-7**:

> *"Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink."*

Jesus deliberately spoke to a Samaritan woman. The social barrier between Jews and Samaritans becomes obvious from her immediate response.

John wrote in **John 4:9**:

> *"Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."*

The Gospel is not restricted by race, culture, social background or personal history. Jesus did not allow the hostility between Jews and Samaritans to prevent Him from reaching this woman.

This agrees with the everlasting Gospel going to every nation, kindred, tongue and people. No human barrier changes the need for salvation, and no human barrier changes the Saviour.

Jesus Did Not Allow the Conversation to Be Sidetracked

The woman immediately raised the difference between Jews and Samaritans. Jesus did not allow that issue to become the centre of the conversation. He moved directly towards the spiritual need and the gift that God was offering.

Jesus said in **John 4:10**:

> *"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."*

Notice the two things Jesus brought before her: *"the gift of God"* and *"who it is that saith to thee."* The Gospel ultimately brings the hearer to both. Salvation is the gift of God, and that salvation is found in Jesus Christ.

Gospel ministry can easily become distracted by secondary arguments. A person may raise religious traditions, denominational differences, personal experiences or questions that move the conversation away from the central need. Not every question should be ignored, but the messenger must recognise the direction in which the Gospel is moving.

The purpose is to bring the person to Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How did Jesus keep His conversation with the Samaritan woman focused upon her deeper spiritual need?

Personal Reflection

Have differences of background, culture or religion made you avoid someone who needs the same Saviour?

Action Step

Identify a barrier you have allowed to shape your conduct. Consider one respectful conversation in which you can put the person's need ahead of that barrier.

Jesus Began With What She Could Understand

Jesus used the setting before Him. They were beside a well, and the woman had come for water. He began with physical water and directed her towards spiritual life.

This does not mean that Gospel ministry depends upon clever illustrations. It shows that Jesus communicated spiritual truth in a way connected with the person before Him.

The woman did not immediately understand what He meant. She continued to think in physical terms, but Jesus did not become impatient with her lack of understanding. That is

important for Gospel ministry because the spiritually dead may not immediately understand spiritual truth.

Confusion does not mean that the Word has failed, nor does it give the messenger permission to become frustrated. The believer must remain patient while continuing to bring the truth clearly.

Jesus Knew the Condition of Her Life

The conversation eventually reached the reality of the woman's personal life.

Jesus said in **John 4:16-18**:

> *"Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly."*

Jesus did not ignore her condition. The Gospel does not avoid sin in order to appear compassionate. He brought the truth of her life into the light.

Yet notice how He did it. He did not begin the conversation by attacking her past. He did not publicly shame her. He did not speak from ignorance or suspicion. He knew the truth and brought it before her at the point when the conversation required it.

This is biblical judgment in operation. Her condition was exposed, but the purpose was not humiliation. The truth was bringing her towards spiritual recognition and towards the One who could give life.

The Messenger Does Not Need to Manufacture Guilt

Jesus already knew what was in the woman's life. In the same way, God knows the heart of every person to whom the Gospel is preached.

The messenger therefore does not need to exaggerate, accuse or manufacture guilt. The Word of God must do its work upon the conscience. The preacher may not know every hidden detail of another person's life, and he does not need to know.

His responsibility is to proclaim the truth faithfully. God knows exactly what that truth is reaching within the heart.

This protects Gospel ministry from becoming personal condemnation. We are not sent to search for reasons to attack people. We are sent to bear witness to Jesus Christ.

Jesus Brought Her to the Question of Who He Is

The conversation continued until the woman spoke of the promised Messiah.

John wrote in **John 4:25-26**:

> *"The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."*

This is where the conversation had been moving. Jesus had spoken about the gift of God, He had spoken about living water, and He had brought the reality of her life into the light.

Now He revealed Himself:

"I that speak unto thee am he."

The Gospel is not complete when a person has only become aware of sin. Conviction must lead towards Jesus Christ. The hearer must see not only the need for salvation but also the Saviour who provides it.

Jesus Christ Must Remain the Centre

The account of the Samaritan woman establishes an important pattern for Gospel ministry without turning that pattern into a rigid method. Jesus crossed a social barrier, began a conversation, refused to let secondary issues control the message, patiently moved from physical understanding towards spiritual truth, exposed the reality of her life, and brought her to the revelation of Himself.

The ministry of Jesus reveals the character of true Gospel ministry. The believer does not reproduce that ministry through external imitation. Jesus Christ now dwells within the born-again believer as Spirit, and His indwelling life expresses the same wisdom, patience, truth and love through His people.

The Gospel reaches real people with real histories and real spiritual needs. The messenger must remain faithful to Scripture, sensitive to the person before him and governed by Christ within.

But the destination never changes. The purpose is not simply to win the conversation, expose sin or make the messenger appear knowledgeable.

The purpose is to bring the hearer face to face with Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why did Jesus reveal the woman's true condition without allowing her past to become the final subject?

Personal Reflection

When you learn of someone's wrong choices, do you become more interested in the failure than in pointing them towards Jesus?

Action Step

Reflect on the way you discuss another person's life. Choose a more truthful, discreet and hopeful response that keeps Christ at the centre.

THE LIVING WATER AND THE AWAKENING OF THE HEART

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The Gospel does not simply tell the woman of Samaria that her life was wrong. Jesus first brought before her something she did not possess: living water. The Gospel does more than expose spiritual need. It reveals that Jesus Christ has life to give.

Jesus said in **John 4:10**:

> *"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."*

At this point, the woman did not understand either the gift or the Person speaking to her. Jesus therefore continued to lead her from what she could see physically towards the spiritual reality He was offering.

The Water Jesus Gives Satisfies the Inner Need

The woman had come to Jacob's well for ordinary water. Jesus used that familiar need to speak about a deeper thirst.

Jesus said in **John 4:13-14**:

> *"Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."*

Physical water could satisfy her for a time, but she would have to return to the well again. Jesus was offering something that would become *"a well of water springing up into everlasting life."*

The Gospel reaches beyond temporary needs to the spiritual need within the person. Humanity continually searches for satisfaction in things that cannot produce spiritual life. Earthly circumstances may change and temporary desires may be met, but none of those things can replace the life found in Jesus Christ.

The living water comes from Him.

Understanding Did Not Come All at Once

The woman was interested, but she still understood Jesus physically.

She responded in **John 4:15**:

> *"The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."*

She wanted what Jesus was offering, but she was still thinking about the inconvenience of returning to the well. Her understanding was incomplete, but Jesus did not become frustrated with her.

This is an important truth for Gospel ministry. A spiritually needy person may hear the words being spoken without immediately understanding their spiritual meaning. The messenger must not mistake confusion for rejection, nor should impatience take control of the conversation. Jesus continued leading her and allowed the truth to unfold until the conversation reached the condition of her own heart.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does Jesus' patience with the Samaritan woman teach us about gradual understanding of spiritual truth?

Personal Reflection

How do you respond when someone misunderstands a Bible truth that seems clear to you?

Action Step

Recall a time you became impatient. Consider how the life of Christ within should change your listening, explanation and treatment of that person.

Jesus Brought Her Life Into the Light

After awakening her interest in the living water, Jesus addressed the reality of her life.

Jesus said in **John 4:16-18**:

> *"Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly."*

Jesus did not expose this in order to humiliate her. He brought the truth into the light because the Gospel must reach the actual spiritual condition of the person. She could not receive the living water while remaining unaware of the condition from which she needed salvation.

This is where judgment and hope meet.

The Gospel reveals what is wrong, but the One revealing the condition is also the One offering life.

The Awakening of the Heart

The Gospel must reach deeper than the physical ear. A person may hear religious words without recognising their own need. But when the Word reaches the conscience, spiritual reality becomes personal.

The woman was no longer dealing only with a Jewish stranger talking about water. The conversation had reached her life. This is what Gospel judgment accomplishes: it brings the person from general religious ideas to the reality of personal spiritual need.

The messenger cannot manufacture this awakening. It is not produced by emotional pressure, accusation or clever persuasion. God must bring His Word to the heart, while the responsibility of the witness is to speak truth faithfully.

The Spiritually Dead Must Hear the Voice of Christ

Jesus used striking language elsewhere to describe what happens when spiritual life comes to those who are dead.

Jesus said in **John 5:25**:

> *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."*

Notice that Jesus says *"and now is."* He is speaking about spiritually dead people who can hear His voice and live.

This gives us an important understanding of Gospel ministry. The preacher speaks words, but salvation does not come simply because another human voice has been heard. Through the truth of the Gospel, the spiritually dead must hear the voice of the Son of God.

The witness points. Jesus Christ calls to life.

From Death to Life

Paul uses the same language when describing salvation.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:4-5**:

> *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"*

To be quickened is to be made alive. This is the spiritual change towards which Gospel ministry is moving. The sinner does not simply gain more religious knowledge. The spiritually dead are brought into life through Jesus Christ.

That life is not produced by the preacher, a method or emotional excitement. Jesus Christ gives life.

The Gift Must Be Received From God

When Jesus first spoke to the woman, He called what He offered *"the gift of God."* A gift cannot be manufactured by the person who needs it. The woman could draw ordinary water from Jacob's well, but she could not produce the living water Jesus offered.

In the same way, a sinner cannot produce spiritual life through natural effort. The Gospel directs the hearer to the One from whom that life comes.

The witness can explain the gift, point to the gift and testify concerning the One who gives the gift. But Jesus Christ must give life.

Jesus Was Bringing Her Towards Himself

The movement of the conversation is important. Jesus began with water and spoke of living water. The woman became interested, her misunderstanding was patiently addressed, and her personal condition was brought into the light. Her heart was being brought towards the spiritual reality before her.

The purpose was not simply that she should recognise that her past was wrong. Jesus was bringing her to the point where she could recognise who was speaking to her.

That is the work of the Gospel. It awakens, reveals and brings the conscience into the light. It directs the spiritually dead towards the voice of the Son of God.

The living water cannot be separated from Jesus Christ.

The heart is awakened so that the hearer may come to the One who gives life.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How did Jesus use the offer of living water to bring the woman towards recognising her own spiritual need?

Personal Reflection

Have you tried to answer a person's surface questions while overlooking their deeper need for Jesus Christ?

Action Step

In your next meaningful conversation, listen for the concern behind the question. Consider how to speak of the life Christ gives without rushing past the person's understanding.

THE WITNESS POINTS PEOPLE TO JESUS CHRIST

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The woman of Samaria did not remain at the well keeping what she had heard to herself. Once Jesus had brought her to the question of who He was, her attention moved away from the water she had come to draw and towards the Person standing before her.

John wrote in **John 4:25-26**:

> *"The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."*

The conversation had reached its centre. Jesus did not leave her thinking only about living water, worship or the failures of her past. He revealed Himself.

"I that speak unto thee am he."

This is where faithful Gospel ministry must lead. The witness does not become the destination. Jesus Christ is the destination.

The Woman Became a Witness

John records what happened next.

John wrote in **John 4:28-30**:

> *"The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him."*

The woman went back to the city and spoke about Jesus. She did not present herself as the answer. She did not ask the people to follow her. Her testimony directed them away from herself and towards the Person she had met.

Her words were simple:

"Come, see a man."

That is the proper direction of Christian witness. The believer may tell what Jesus Christ has done. He may explain the truth that has reached his own life. He may testify of salvation, freedom and new life. But the testimony must always move the hearer towards Jesus Christ.

A Testimony Opens the Way

The woman's words had an effect upon the people of the city.

John wrote in **John 4:39**:

> *"And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did."*

Her testimony mattered. God used what she said to turn the attention of others towards Jesus.

This shows the value of personal witness. A believer does not need to know every answer before speaking about Jesus Christ. He does not need to possess unusual speaking ability. He can truthfully tell what Christ has done and direct another person to Him.

But the woman's testimony was not the end. The people needed to encounter Jesus Christ for themselves.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How did the Samaritan woman's testimony bring others to Jesus Christ rather than make her the centre?

Personal Reflection

Do you hesitate to witness because you cannot answer every question, or do you try to make your own story the main message?

Action Step

Prepare a brief, truthful account of what Jesus Christ has done in your life. Examine whether it directs attention clearly to Him, not to your ability or experience.

The Hearer Must Come to Jesus Christ

John records the important conclusion in **John 4:42**:

> *"And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."*

These words establish an important distinction between the witness and the Saviour. The woman spoke. The people listened. But finally they said:

"we have heard him ourselves."

The purpose of her testimony was fulfilled when the people came beyond her words and recognised Jesus Christ for themselves. This is the goal of Gospel ministry.

The preacher may introduce the hearer to Scripture. The witness may explain what Jesus Christ has done. The believer may answer questions and speak of personal experience. But salvation cannot rest upon another person's testimony.

The hearer must come to Jesus Christ.

The Witness Does Not Take the Place of Christ

This protects Gospel ministry from becoming centred upon human personalities. A person may first hear the Gospel through a parent, friend, preacher or another believer. That messenger may become deeply important in helping the person understand truth. But the messenger must never occupy the place that belongs to Jesus Christ.

The Samaritan woman did not become the spiritual centre of the people who heard her testimony. She pointed them to Jesus. The people then confessed:

"this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

The Gospel has reached its proper centre when the hearer sees Jesus Christ.

The Church Points People to Jesus Christ

The same principle governs the ministry of the Church. The Church does not exist to gather people around itself as though the organisation were salvation. It bears witness to Jesus Christ.

The Church belongs to Him. The Gospel belongs to Him. The saving power belongs to Him. The life belongs to Him.

The Church therefore does not say, *"Come to us and we will save you."* It says, in effect:

"Come and see Jesus Christ."

This does not reduce the importance of the Church. It establishes its proper purpose. The born-again people of God bear witness to the One who dwells within them.

Christ Within Makes the Witness Living

Christian witness is not an external attempt to imitate the Samaritan woman. We do not simply copy the words *"Come, see"* and expect a method to produce salvation.

At the new birth, Jesus Christ comes to dwell within the believer as Spirit. The witness flows from that indwelling life. The believer speaks because he has received life. He testifies because he knows the Saviour. He points others to Jesus Christ because Christ has become the centre of his own life.

This is why true testimony carries more than religious information. It comes from a life in which Jesus Christ is present.

The Saviour Must Be Heard

The Samaritan account gives us a clear progression. The woman heard Jesus. Her own life was brought into the light. Jesus revealed Himself to her. She went and testified.

Others came because of her words. Then they heard Jesus for themselves.

The witness had served its purpose.

The people did not finally say, *"We believe because the woman is persuasive."* They said:

"we have heard him ourselves."

That is the mark of faithful Gospel witness. The messenger points. The hearer comes. Jesus Christ reveals Himself through His Word. And the confession becomes:

"This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

The Gospel witness must never make himself the centre.

He points every soul to Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must people ultimately hear and respond to Jesus Christ rather than depend upon another person's testimony?

Personal Reflection

Have you encouraged someone to rely on your experience or the authority of a teacher rather than seek the truth of Jesus Christ?

Action Step

Consider one person you have tried to persuade. Choose a Bible account or saying of Jesus that you could share so their confidence may rest in Him.

CONCLUSION: PREACHING THE GOSPEL THAT SAVES

BACK TO CONTENTS

The Gospel that saves must be both true in its message and right in its ministry. It cannot be altered to accommodate sin, human tradition or religious preference. Neither can it be carried in a spirit that contradicts the saving purpose of Jesus Christ.

Paul declared that the Gospel of Christ is *"the power of God unto salvation."* That power does not belong to the personality of the preacher, the strength of an argument or a particular method. The saving power belongs to God, and the message must continually bring the hearer to Jesus Christ.

The believer has been called to be a witness.

Jesus said in **Acts 1:8**:

> *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*

The words *"witnesses unto me"* establish the direction of Gospel ministry. The Church does not draw people to itself. The messenger does not become the centre. The witness points every soul to Jesus Christ.

That witness must flow from the indwelling life of Christ. At the new birth, the believer receives the Spirit of Christ. Gospel ministry is therefore not an outward attempt to imitate Jesus or reproduce His manner through natural strength. His life within must govern the believer's words, patience, courage, truth and love.

The encounter with the woman of Samaria showed this clearly. Jesus crossed barriers, remained focused upon spiritual truth, patiently dealt with misunderstanding, brought the reality of her life into the light and revealed Himself as the Christ.

The woman then became a witness. She went to the city and said:

"Come, see a man."

Her testimony brought others towards Jesus, but her words were not the final destination. When the Samaritans heard Jesus for themselves, they said:

"Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

That is the purpose of faithful Gospel ministry.

The Gospel reveals the true condition of the heart, but it does not leave the sinner beneath condemnation. It calls for repentance and directs the hearer to the remedy.

The Gospel is not a rigid formula. It is not human pressure. It is not angry condemnation.

It is the truth of God ministered through the Spirit of Christ, bringing the spiritually dead to the One who gives life.

The messenger bears witness. The hearer must respond.

Jesus Christ saves.

The Gospel that saves must always bring people to Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What makes faithful Gospel witness both truthful in message and governed by the life of Christ within?

Personal Reflection

What has this study revealed about your motives, tone or confidence when speaking to people about salvation?

Action Step

Name one weakness you have recognised in your witness. Explain how your next conversation should express Christ's patience, love and truth rather than human pressure.

MODULE CONCLUSION: THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

BACK TO CONTENTS

Throughout this module, we have followed the everlasting Gospel from its promise before the manifestation of Jesus Christ, through its saving purpose, and into the responsibility of those who now proclaim it.

The Gospel is everlasting because its centre never changes. Jesus Christ was not introduced as a later answer to an unexpected problem. He was foreordained before the foundation of the world, and the promises, sacrifices, types and shadows of Scripture pointed towards Him.

Noah preached righteousness. Abraham believed God, and Scripture says that the Gospel was preached beforehand unto him. What was seen in promise has now been revealed in fulfilment.

The writer of Hebrews said in **Hebrews 13:8**:

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

There has therefore never been another Saviour, another saving way or another Gospel. The revelation became clearer as God's purpose unfolded, but the centre remained the same.

The everlasting Gospel is Jesus Christ.

We then considered why this Gospel is preached. Peter gives the purpose in **1 Peter 4:6**:

> *"For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."*

The Gospel is preached to those who are spiritually dead. It brings the life according to the flesh under the judgment of God's Word, awakens the conscience and calls the sinner to repentance. But judgment is not the end. The purpose moves towards life.

The spiritually dead must hear the voice of the Son of God and live.

This also clarified Peter's reference to the spirits in prison. They were the disobedient people of Noah's generation, spiritually dead and held in the bondage of sin while physically alive. Christ preached to them by His Spirit through Noah.

Scripture does not teach that Jesus descended into hell after Calvary to preach to physically dead souls, nor does it offer another Gospel opportunity after physical death.

The time to hear, repent and turn to God is now.

The Gospel does not simply persuade people to adopt a better way of living. It brings them to the new birth. At the new birth, Jesus Christ comes to dwell within the believer as Spirit.

The believer receives the Person, not a partial salvation that must later be completed by another experience. The new life then flows from Christ within.

Finally, we considered how the Gospel that saves must be preached. The true Gospel must never be altered to accommodate sin, religious tradition or human preference. Paul called it *"the power of God unto salvation,"* and Jesus told His disciples that they would be *"witnesses unto me."*

The witness does not become the centre. The Church does not become the centre.

Jesus Christ remains the centre.

Gospel ministry must therefore flow from His indwelling life. The Gospel is not ministered through external imitation, natural strength, human pressure or a rigid formula. Christ within must govern the believer's words, love, patience, courage and faithfulness.

Jesus' encounter with the woman of Samaria showed this clearly. He crossed barriers, patiently brought spiritual truth before her, exposed the reality of her life and then revealed Himself. She became a witness and told others, *"Come, see a man."*

Yet her testimony was not the destination. The people came to Jesus and finally said, *"we have heard him ourselves."*

That is the purpose of Gospel witness.

The messenger points. The hearer responds.

Jesus Christ saves.

Jesus said in **John 14:6**:

> *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."*

The everlasting Gospel has one Saviour, one saving purpose and one message from beginning to end. It was present in promise, revealed in fulfilment, preached to bring the spiritually dead into life, and entrusted to believers who bear witness to Jesus Christ.

From beginning to end, the Gospel is not about drawing people to a system, an organisation, a ceremony or a human personality. It brings every soul to the Person.

Jesus Christ is the way.

Jesus Christ is the truth.

Jesus Christ is the life.

The everlasting Gospel is all Jesus.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do the everlasting Gospel, its purpose and its faithful proclamation all centre in Jesus Christ?

Personal Reflection

Of the truths about one Saviour, the need for new life and the way we witness, which most challenges your present thinking or conduct?

Action Step

State the truth that has corrected you. Consider one lasting change in your belief or witness that will keep Jesus Christ, rather than methods or religious systems, at the centre.

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

Why must a faithful Gospel message proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ, including the need for repentance and new spiritual life?

2. Understanding

How do **Acts 1:8** *and* **Romans 5:5** *explain both the purpose of a witness and the love that must govern that witness?*

3. Personal Reflection

What have you recognised about your own impatience, pride or fear when speaking about salvation with other people?

4. Response to Truth

How will you speak truth about sin while ensuring that your manner directs the hearer towards Jesus Christ rather than leaving them condemned?

5. Action Step

Think of one person with whom you could speak about Jesus Christ. What will you do to listen carefully and share the Gospel with love, and when?

6. Early Response

Have you begun the response described in Question 5? If so, explain what happened or what you learnt. If not, explain what has prevented you from beginning.

7. Ongoing Practice

What habits will help you remain grounded in God's Word, governed by Christ's love and ready to listen without relying upon a rigid formula?

8. Doctrinal Clarity

How do the Samaritan woman's growing understanding and her neighbours' own hearing of Jesus show that the witness must point beyond themselves to Christ?

9. Living the Truth

How would you respond to someone who feels judged or comes from a different religious background while remaining faithful to the Gospel?

10. Final Response

What is the most important change this module calls for in your witness, and how will your words and conduct keep Jesus Christ at the centre?