

- Take another good look at the above graphic **on page 12** and identify some words that fall into the “non-religion” category.

Summary: Both **Religion and Non-Religion** deny the need for God’s saving grace in Christ. Both confirm that any human effort to reach God is never successful. The gap between a holy God and sinful humanity cannot be bridged by religious actions or self-importance. Something more is needed.

A Question – How are these two attitudes displayed in Uganda?

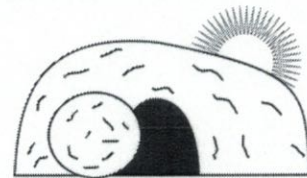
What’s the GOOD NEWS? - One of the best descriptions of the gospel message is found in Paul’s letter to the Corinthian church. Proclaiming that this gospel message was revealed to him by the Lord, Paul reminds Corinthian believers that they accepted the gospel message unto salvation. Now they needed to stand firm on its truth (1 Corinthians 15:1,2). **With the person sitting next to you, read 1 Corinthians 15:3-11. Look closely at Paul’s main points listed below. Next to each phrase, explain why each one is “good news.”**

- Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3)



- That he was buried (1 Corinthians 15:4)

- That he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:4)



- That he appeared to many people after he was raised (1 Corinthians 15:5-11)

The “good news” is that **in Christ**, God fulfilled all that he had promised to do to reconcile lost and guilty human beings to himself. Our great enemy -death - has been conquered and one day, when all God’s purposes and promises are fulfilled, Christ will return in ultimate victory over sin, death and the grave. Until then, we have an advocate with the Father (1 John 2:2) and the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to all who place their trust in Christ Jesus. Our Lord’s return will bring human history to an end and usher in God’s glorious eternal reign.

Large Group Conversation - Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-28. Answer the following questions together in the large group.

- What does Christ's resurrection mean for every believer?
- When you read the word "kingdom" in verse 24, what came to your mind?
- What do you think it means to be part of "God's Kingdom"?

The Connection Between the Gospel and the Kingdom of God

The Gospel of Mark begins with these words: "The beginning of the *gospel* about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mark's Gospel describes the power and authority of Jesus Christ to a Roman audience well acquainted with power and authority. In fact, Roman Emperors were thought to be god-like. The good news is the Jesus Christ, the real **Son of God**, has come to establish his kingdom on earth; a kingdom with absolute authority over all things and has no end.

Watch the YouTube video <https://youtu.be/uOY5cwxv-PU> on "The Kingdom of God".

Matthew's Gospel emphasizes Jesus' teaching on how God's Kingdom is lived out on earth. When Jesus began to teach, he proclaimed, "Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven** is near." (Matthew 4:17). Repent means turn and go in another direction; have a change of loyalty to a new ruler. Jesus called disciples to follow him, and he "went through Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the **good news of the kingdom** and healing every disease and sickness among the people" (Matthew 4:23). King Jesus has authority over all things.

Matthew includes five clear sections of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God. His followers are to become a new society; one standing in vivid contrast to the "kingdoms of this world".

- **Chapters 5-7** - The attitudes and actions of the new society of God's Kingdom. **Read Matthew 6:33,34** – What does it mean to seek first God's Kingdom?
- **Chapter 10** – Christ-followers are sent on a Jesus-shaped mission to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom. **Read Matthew 9:35-38**. How does this passage introduce the mission's importance?
- **Chapter 13** – Jesus used everyday stories (parables) to describe the growing nature of God's kingdom as well as individuals in it – "It's like this in the kingdom..." **Read Matthew 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, and 47**. How do these pictures describe the nature of God's Kingdom?



- **Chapter 18** - Kingdom relationships look like this! **Read Matthew 18:1-35**. How is forgiveness an essential part of these relationships?
- **Chapters 23-25** – Kingdom truths confront false religion (**Read Matthew 23:1-4**), explain Christ’s return (**Read Matthew 24:30-31**), and teach of an eternal Kingdom (**Read Matthew 25:46**). How can we live today with eternity in our sight?

A Continuous Theme of Scripture. Luke, John, Acts, and the Epistles illustrate how life is to be lived in God’s Kingdom. As followers of Christ, we live under his authority and join other Christ-followers (the church) in living for the glory of God. Christ’s power transforms his people to a new way of living and establishes a new society that impacts the world with grace and truth.

Summarize the themes of the following verses in order to better understand God’s Kingdom work.

- Acts 1:8
- Romans 12:1,2.
- Titus 3:3-8
- Revelation 5:9-14

Watch the YouTube video <https://youtu.be/Qv4IXiLJA3o> on the “Gospel and Culture”.

A Gospel for the World



John 3:16 reminds us that the gospel is for the world. “For God so loved the world” is at the heart of the gospel and is displayed in the giving (grace) of Jesus Christ. Responding by faith in Christ brings those who believe into everlasting life; beginning immediately (John 1:12,13; 3:16). The gospel is simple, yet profound. Its truth touches the hearts and minds of all who trust in Christ. This leads to personal transformation as one

relies on the active grace of the Triune God.

Because Jesus commands his followers to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21; and Acts 1:8), it is important to understand how individuals from different nations hear the “good news”. Jayson Georges, in his book *The 3D Gospel*, speaks of the gospel’s power to address the major cultural themes of guilt, shame, and fear found in every nation. However, different parts of the world tend to emphasize one theme more than the others.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell us that Jesus sets people free from all three ways of thinking. Jesus proclaims that the “good news” of the gospel is found in himself. As you read the Gospels, look for the way Jesus addresses these themes in the lives of those he met.

In particular, the New Testament book of Ephesians captures how these three cultural themes are addressed by the **GOOD NEWS**. (*thoughts are taken from page 12 of Georges’ book*).



A Move from Guilt to Innocence – This theme is especially found in individualistic cultures, though it is a global problem. One’s sinful actions and guilt, before a holy God, requires judgement. Payment of sin’s debt is needed. The gospel proclaims that Christ died in our place and paid the penalty that is rightfully ours. A move from guilt to innocence is accomplished only by God’s grace. Not getting what we deserve is the very

definition of grace. In Ephesians, Paul emphasizes that:

“In him (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph. 1:7a).

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in transgressions (Eph. 2:4-5).

For “it is by grace that we have been saved through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works – so that no one can boast.” (Eph. 2:8-9).

Grasping the Good News – What are some ways we try to excuse our sinful actions? How does the gospel address one’s guilt leading a person to embrace God’s forgiveness in Christ?

A Move from Shame to Honor – Shame assumes that a strong community relationship is broken by one’s actions. Shame also affects one’s identity with others. As a result, the shamed person is treated as an outcast and subject to ridicule. When Jesus healed lepers and ate with “sinners”, he saw the value of each person. The gospel tells us that by faith in Christ, sinful, broken, and disgraced people are restored to an honorable relationship with God. In Ephesians, Paul proclaims



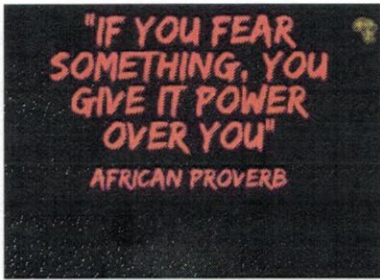
“In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ (Eph.1:5).

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance.” (Ephesians 2:10)

In Christ, Gentiles are “no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household” (Eph. 2:19; see also Philippians. 2:12-13).

“Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ.” (Ephesians 5:21)

Grasping the Good News – Give examples of how shame is practiced in Uganda. How does Christ restore his followers to an honorable identity and relationship with God?



A Move from Fear to Power – This cultural trait highlights the belief that spiritual powers define human behavior. Somehow, it is thought that these powers must be satisfied for personal benefit and protection. This belief creates **fear** that can grip a person and a local community. It is thought that some act or payment must be made to appease the evil powers or ancestral spirits that have a hold over people. The **gospel** proclaims that Christ has overcome Satan and the world. He serves as our mediator between God and man.

In Christ and by His Spirit, one experiences the powerful ability to overcome the world, flesh, and the devil. In Ephesians, Paul proclaims:

“...That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at this right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion” (Eph. 1:19-21).

Because of Christ’s victory over sin and death, Christians can *“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Eph. 6:10-11).*

Grasping the Good News – Describe how this theme of fear is experienced in Ugandan life. In what ways does belief in Christ dismiss the need for cultural mediators (witch doctors, shamans, “powerful” pastors)? How does Christ enable us to live in the power of the Holy Spirit in order to defeat temptation and the evil that come our way?

Our Task is to Proclaim the Good News

Five Clarifying Sentences on Proclaiming the Gospel

summarized by Justin Taylor and taken in part from The Gospel Coalition website.

- 1. The gospel is normally disseminated in proclamation.** (“I . . . preached to you.”) There’s almost always a connection in the NT between the “gospel” and words for “heralding” it. It must be announced and explained.
- 2. The gospel is fruitfully received in authentic persevering faith.** Cf. Col. 1.
- 3. The gospel is properly disclosed in the context of personal self-humiliation.** 1 Cor. 15:9. John Newton writes: *I am not what I want to be. - I am not what I hope to be. - But by the grace of God, I am not what I was.* When the gospel truly does its work, a “proud Christian” is an unthinkable.
- 4. The gospel is rightly asserted to be the central confession of the whole church.** 1 Cor 15:9. Be suspicious of any church that praises what it is doing differently than everybody else.
- 5. The gospel is boldly advancing under the contested reign and inevitable victory of Christ the King.** Phil. 2. “Christ must reign until he has put his enemies under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25). Verse 58: “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

A Gospel Summary: Eight Summarizing Words

By D.A Carson from an Address at The Gospel Coalition, based on 1 Corinthians 15:1-24 summarized by Justin Taylor and taken in part from The Gospel Coalition website.

The Heart of the Gospel – Jesus Christ



Birth



Teaching



Death



Resurrection



Ascension



2nd Coming

1. **The gospel is Christological.** It is Christ-centered. Not a bland theism or an impersonal pantheism; it's irrevocably Christ-centered. "The gospel is not preached if Christ is not preached" (Stott). The gospel embraces not just Christ's person, but also his death and resurrection. It's not enough to emphasize Christmas and downplay Good Friday and Easter. Jesus is the promised Messiah who died and rose again.

2. **The gospel is theological.** It makes no sense to pit the mission of the Son against the mission of the Father. Some surveys of redemptive history depersonalize the wrath of God. From the beginning sin has been an offense against *God*. When we sin in any way, God is invariably the most offended party (Ps. 51:4). God gets most angry at idolatry, the "de-Godding of God."

3. **The gospel is biblical.** Christ died, buried, was raised—"according to the Scriptures" (cf. Luke 24; Ps. 16; Isa. 53; Ps. 2).

4. **The gospel is apostolic.** There were 500+ witnesses, but attention is drawn in particular to the apostles.

5. **The gospel is historical.** The burial (death) and appearances (resurrection) are historical, in datable sequence. They combine to form a nexus. The claims are irreducibly historical. In other religions, there is nothing intrinsic in the leader that is required for its truth. But for Christianity, *part of the validation of faith is the truthfulness of faith's object*—in this case, Christ's resurrection. The Bible never asks us to believe anything that's not true.

6. **The gospel is personal.** The gospel is not merely a historical event, but also sets out a way of personal salvation.

7. **The gospel is universal.** Christ is the new Adam (vv. 22, 47-50). There is a comprehensive vision, drawing people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. It does not save every person, but it is gloriously universal in its comprehensive sweep.

8. **The gospel is eschatological.** Some of the blessings we receive now are end-time blessings brought back into today. But there is also a final transformation. All of the fruit of the gospel will appear in the new heavens and the new earth.

Final Thoughts: Tell another person how Session 3 themes (*Gospel, Kingdom and Culture*) inform the current ministry to which God has called you. Give thanks for your part in the gospel story!