

GIFT BOOK SERIES | 09 JANUARY 2022



SPEAKING OF JESUS

Everyday Practices for
Sharing Gospel Hope



PART ONE | GOOD NEWS!



SPEAKING OF JESUS

GOOD NEWS !

By David Fields

GIFT BOOK SERIES: PART ONE

I'm really excited for the opportunity to look more closely at the mission of God, and how we as God's people are called to join in with it as his missionary people.

Because God is on mission, working out his plan to redeem and restore his good creation, mission and evangelism are not an optional part of the Christian life for those who happen to be particularly serious. Offering Gospel hope to the world was central to the final commission Jesus gives to his followers (see Acts 1:8; Luke 24:46-47; John, 20:21; Matt 28:18-20), and so this is the continuing work of the whole people of God, for the glory of God, and the good of the world. My hope and prayer is that through this study – the sermons and the reflection questions – “Speaking of Jesus” would become a natural part of your everyday life, and that together we would embody and announce this hope in ways that demonstrate the beauty of the message!



In the Part One study, we are looking at some of the 'hang-ups' or challenges we might face with even wanting to share Jesus with others. We will then focus in on the goodness of the good news, and the responsibility of believers to let our lives demonstrate the beauty of the Gospel.

Open Up

1. When you hear the word "evangelism" what are the first thoughts or images that come to mind? Why do you think that is?
2. The very idea of 'evangelism' has come on hard times in recent decades – even for some Christians. For many in Western society, the idea of sharing Jesus with our neighbors may be seen as insensitive, offensive, or inappropriate. In your view, why do you think evangelism has come to be viewed in this way?

At least one of the powerful, underlying reasons for this sense of evangelism comes up in Sam Chan's book *Evangelism in a Skeptical World*. Here he notes that since the time of Immanuel Kant in the 1700's, Western society divides the world into two realms of knowledge: 1) the area of values, ethics, and religious beliefs (the 'noumenal' for those who want to get fancy); and 2) the realm of facts, evidence and data (the 'phenomenal'). This divide has also led to the sacred secular divide in Western cultures.

In places like the Middle East, people are happy to talk about their religious beliefs openly (I think of our time in Turkey where people would openly discuss their religion). But in the Western world, we are told not to discuss politics and religion at dinner parties. Why? That's the area where arguments might arise. So, there is an unspoken yet powerful underlying sense that it is inappropriate to speak about our faith in the 'secular' or public sphere.



Even Christian people feel this tension. Because of this reality in which we live, the rest of our sessions will help us think about how we can still 'bear fruit' in a world where this tension exists. But before we go into those areas, we need to clarify what the "evangel" is, and what it would mean for us to be agents of this news.

Dig In

3. In the message, Pastor Dave pointed to **Luke 2:11** as a passage that first announces the "good news" or Gospel and shows how the shepherds respond to it. What are some of the key factors of this 'news' that the angels mention? How is that news truly "good" – for you, and for our world?
4. **Look at 2:14** – the angels' song. Darrell Johnson notes the connection between 'peace' and 'glory'

"Glory to God in the highest" is the infrastructure for "peace on earth." No glory to God, no peace. The shalom Jesus brings into the world is experienced when we bow the knee before the God who reigns, when we step off the throne of life and accept our place as creatures, as children, as followers."

- Darrell Johnson, *The Beatitudes*

God's ultimate peace finally comes only to those who are open to giving glory to God. This is news, then, requires response. It is not only something that we 'hear' but something we must 'act' on.

- a. How do the shepherds respond to this news? (Look at Luke 2:15-18).
- b. In what ways does this help us imagine our task of 'evangelism'?



5. Simone Gathercole, Cambridge theologian, points to how the good news of Jesus has at least these three basic components.

1. "The Son of God emptied himself and came into the world in Jesus Christ, becoming a servant." This is about the identity of Jesus. Jesus is "God with us." (See Phil 2:5-11; Matt 1:23; Col 1:19 etc.).
2. "He died on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice." Jesus lived a perfect life, and died a sinner's death – for us, as a substitute in our place. He dies to forgive us for our sins and make us right with God. (See Col 1:20; 2:14-15; Rom 3:23-25 etc.)
3. "He rose from the grave as the first-fruits of a whole renewed world." Jesus is the risen and reigning King, worthy of our love and trust, and he will bring about a whole new world.

Consider each of these three elements: God comes as a humble servant in Jesus. Jesus lays down his life, out of love, in order to save ours – to forgive us and fill us. Jesus conquers evil and death in order to renew the whole world, bringing peace and wholeness, as well as life without parting.

- a. How do these elements bring you joy personally, fire you up, and/or make you want to share this news with others?
- b. How might that news be seen as good to your co-workers and neighbor's? What parts might they connect with deeply? Why?

Practice It

Read through **Titus 2:1-11** paying attention to the multiple ways that the church is to live so that the 'teaching about God our Savior' would be attractive.



There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. - Gal 3:28

(Note: the culture in which Paul writes these commands has very defined gender roles and includes slavery as part-and-parcel of everyday life in the ancient Greco-Roman world. The point of this text is not to reinforce these cultural features as though they are fitting to every future situation, but to commend behavior in the very real circumstances of everyday life that are fitting to the gospel. Further, the list of commands that are given to each 'grouping' of people could be said to other every grouping of people as well and are in various places in the New Testament. See also Galatians 3:28).

6. Notice the repetition of the command to be "self-controlled." In the ancient world there was widespread sexual immorality, drunkenness, violence, and hateful/harmful speech.
 - a. In what ways do you think that the early church putting on this virtue of "self-control" would lead people to see the attractiveness of the message of Jesus – the "teaching about God our Savior"?
 - b. How would that be similarly true in our setting today?
 - c. In what ways do Paul's words encourage you or challenge you or (likely) both? What element from this list might the Spirit be calling you to humbly adopt or strengthen in your life this week?

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FOR THE SAKE
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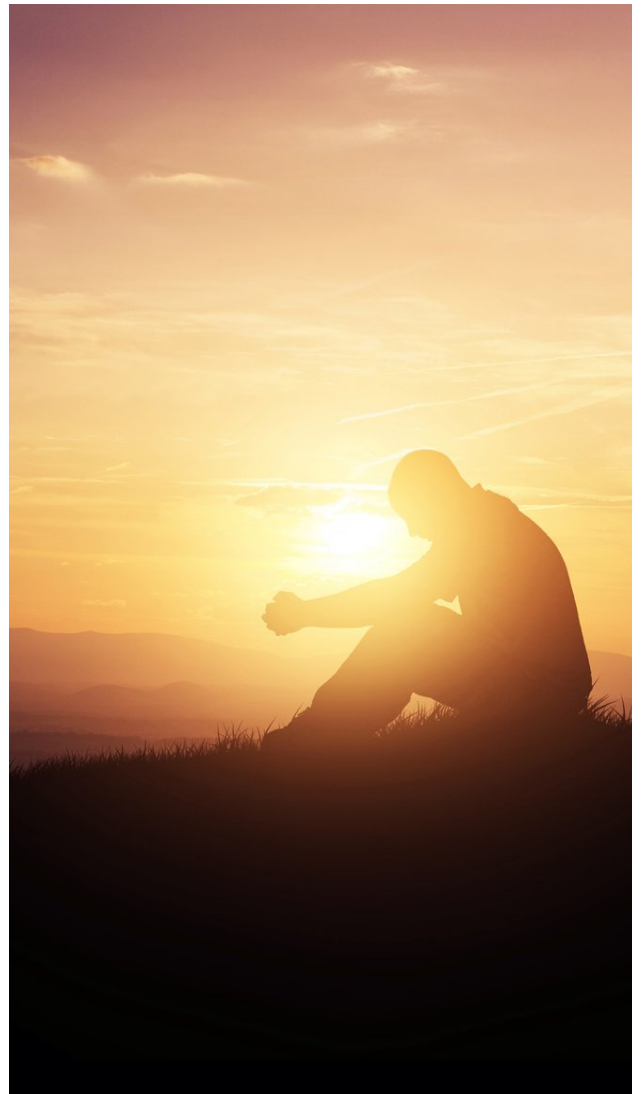
– Titus 2

7. Focus on the word “attractive” (Greek: *kosmeo*) in Titus 2:10.

“In the ancient Greek world, that word *kosmeo* meant “to put in order, or to adorn.” It was used of the arrangement of jewels in a manner to set off their full beauty (Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*).

Consider, this week, how the way you speak and act with those in your life will help demonstrate, to ‘set off the full beauty’ of the news of Jesus. **Take some time to pray** about these things with your Life Group.

Let’s pray the Lord’s Prayer through this week, pausing particularly over the section where we ask that God’s name be honored (that’s what “hallowed by your name” means), and “your kingdom come and will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” **taking time for committed prayer for 3 or 4 people that God has laid on our hearts who need to come to faith in Jesus.**



From Jesus’ Teaching on Prayer in
Matthew 6:9-13

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our
debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
