

## Gospel-Fluency

*We believe that only the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God to save us from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and ultimately from the presence of sin when Jesus returns; therefore, we are committed to grow in our gospel fluency: speaking the truth of Jesus to each other and calling each other to live lives that reflect the power of the gospel.*

A gospel-centered life and a gospel-saturated community flow from continually growing in our understanding and enjoyment of the good news of Jesus and sharing that truth and joy with each other. We *have been saved* from the penalty of sin. Though once we were rebels and enemies of God, deserving his wrath, Jesus died, buried, and rose again in order to give us new life, justify us before God, and adopt us into God's family.<sup>1</sup> We *are being saved* from the power of sin. We have died and been raised with Jesus and in union with him have all that we need to grow in becoming like Jesus: the presence and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the promises of God's word, and the community of God's people.<sup>2</sup> We *will be saved* from the presence of sin. The redemption of Jesus began the process of restoration which will be complete only when Jesus returns. God will make a new heaven and earth and Jesus will make a complete end of sin, suffering, evil, and brokenness. As believers, we will enjoy the presence of God forever, while those who do not believe will be separated from God forever.<sup>3</sup>

The means by which God's people are continually transformed into the image of Jesus is through continually seeing the glory of the gospel in God's word. 2 Corinthians 3:18 promises that as we "behold the glory of the Lord, [we] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." Therefore, one of the main purposes of a gospel community is continually to show each other the glory of Jesus. In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul expands on this responsibility when he instructed us about the means by which the church grows up into maturity. As God's people 1) speak the truth (of the gospel) in love and 2) as they minister to each other, God's people grow up into Christ. In order to effectively equip each other in a missional community, **there will need to be a culture where it is normal to speak the gospel to each other regularly.** Every sin and issue that stands in the way of our faithfulness to Jesus' commands is ultimately a gospel issue, since sin is the outcome of unbelief in Jesus (John 16:9). One of the key responsibilities of every member of a missional community, especially the leader(s), is to equip each other to know the gospel, apply it all of life, and to speak it to each other.

Therefore, the group should regularly seek ways to grow in their understanding of the gospel and how it relates to all of life. Examples of how the group can cultivate gospel fluency are rehearsing the gospel regularly (Who is Jesus? What did Jesus do? What must we do? What happens to us as we do?), applying the gospel to personal stories, expressing gospel need and celebrating Jesus with communion, slowing down to identify idols and showing how Jesus is superior, continually connect the stories of others and the stories in God's Word to the overall story of redemption and regularly asking questions like "how does the gospel address this?" and "what about the gospel are you not believing?" For more detailed help, see the article, "Gospel Fluency" by Jeff Vanderstelt.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 1:18,21,28-29; 3:21-26; Ephesians 2:1-3; John 1:1-4, 14; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-19; 2:9; 1 Corinthians 15:3-7; 2 Corinthians 5:21; John 1:29; Galatians 1:4; Hebrews 5:1,3; 1 Peter 2:24.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 15:1-8; Romans 8:11; John 17:15-19; 1 Thess. 4:3; Ephesians 2:10, 4:11-16; Col. 1:28; 2 Peter 1:3-11.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 21:1-4; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Romans 10:8-15; 1 Peter 2:11-12, 3:15.

## Gospel-Fluency Assessment

Fill out the following assessment *prayerfully*, asking God to help you be honest with the questions presented. However, remember that assessment is *not* a measure of your sanctification. A higher score does not equal higher holiness points! Being gospel fluent does not necessarily mean you have a deeper, better relationship with Jesus. *This assessment is simply a tool to identify where you want to grow in gospel fluency.*

**On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being *strongly disagree* and 5 being *strongly agree*), rate the following:**

### **Knowing the Gospel**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand and can explain why people are sinners and deserve God's wrath for their sin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand and can explain why God cannot offer forgiveness without a sacrifice for sin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand and can explain why it is important for redemption that Jesus be man *and* God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand and can explain why the *sinless life* of Jesus is important for our salvation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand and can explain why the *death* of Jesus is important for our salvation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand and can explain why the *resurrection* of Jesus is important for our salvation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand and can explain why the *ascension* of Jesus is important for our salvation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand and can explain the role of each member of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in salvation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand and can explain what part the "imputed righteousness of Jesus" plays in salvation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand and can explain the difference between justification (imputed righteousness) and sanctification (living a holy life).
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand and can explain what it means to have my identity transformed by the gospel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand and can explain how the gospel fits into the overall story of God as revealed in the Bible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Total** (Range: 12 to 60)

### **Internalizing (Applying) the Gospel**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I frequently ask questions like, "how does the gospel have to do with this?" or "how does the truth about Jesus's person and work transform this area of my life?"
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am generally able to connect my sin to a specific area of unbelief in or failure to rejoice in the gospel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prayer is usually the first resort when trouble or temptation comes in my life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am generally able to take risks, even knowing those risks may result in failure, because I know I'm accepted by God through Jesus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am not fearful of God's wrath against me, but know, even when I've sinned, that he loves me and delights to lavish me with grace in Jesus.

- \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to freely confess my faults to others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to see God's goodness even in dark times.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am content in my relationships because I am accepted by God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I feel forgiven and totally accepted by God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am generally able to examine the deeper motives of my heart without becoming fearful, angry, or discouraged.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am teachable and open to rebuke, correction, and instruction, even from those that are less experienced and less mature than I.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I want others, both believers and unbelievers, to experience the freedom of the gospel and am willing to sacrifice to be a part of that mission.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Total** (Range: 12 to 60)

### ***Speaking the Gospel***

- \_\_\_\_\_ The gospel has freed me to move outward, towards believers and unbelievers, to serve them, love them, and speak the truth in love.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus is more and more the subject of my conversations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am aware of my inability to fix life, people, and problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I believe that the gospel, as it is fully revealed in the Bible, has the power to radically transform the lives of my brothers and sisters in Christ.
- \_\_\_\_\_ When speaking, I ground what I say in the word of God, not just in Biblical or theological concepts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ My first response to the sins, failures, troubles, and conflict with others is to pray for supernatural help from the Spirit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to help guide a person toward discovering heart motivations or idolatry that may be behind their behavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to rejoice in Jesus, even while confronting someone with their sin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am confident in the convicting and encouraging power of the Holy Spirit and therefore do not feel that I have to have all the right answers before speaking to both believers and unbelievers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ My greatest desire in addressing someone's sin, encouraging them, or challenging them, is to see them rejoicing in Jesus, not simply change their behavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to hear someone's story and make meaningful connections to God's story. (Creation / Fall / Redemption / Restoration).
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am comfortable telling my own story (including my sin and suffering) to believers and unbelievers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **Total** (Range: 12 to 60)

# Gospel Fluency

By Jeff Vanderstelt

## Gospel Growth

### Speaking the TRUTH in Love IN Ministry

In Ephesians 4:11-16, we are instructed about the means by which the Church grows up into maturity. God gives certain people to the church to equip all believers for ministry (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers). Then as each part is doing their job, they build up the body of Christ to maturity and the stature of the fullness of Christ. Paul goes on to describe what must take place for this growth to occur:

1. Speaking the Truth in Love – The truth is found in the person and work of Jesus. Jesus said, *“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”*. So, speaking the truth in love is another way of saying – *“Speak the Gospel to one another.”*
2. In Ministry (and on mission) – The way in which the body is built up is through each part ministering to the others (v. 16). It is in ministry and on mission that we become aware of where each of us is in need of being built up in the Gospel. The areas of deficiency in our belief in the Gospel show up when we are called to Love Others and Makes Disciples.

Therefore, in order to grow up in Christ and help others grow up in Christ, we need to be Gospel Fluent and call people to live lives that both demand the power of the Gospel and reveal where we are not living in the truth of the Gospel

### FOR DISCUSSION

*How have you grown in Gospel Fluency? What has been most effective in shaping you to be able to “Bring the Gospel to Bear” on issues in your life and others?*

*How have you shaped your group to be Gospel Fluent? What have you found to be most effective in equipping your Missional Community to speak the truth in love to one another and prepare them to share with those who don't yet believe?*

## **Creating a Culture**

In order to effectively equip your missional community in Gospel Fluency, you will need to create a culture where it is normal to speak the Gospel to each other regularly. Every sin and issue that stands in the way of our faithfulness to Jesus' commands is ultimately a Gospel issue, since sin is the outcome of unbelief in Jesus (John 16:9). One of your key jobs will be to equip your people to KNOW the Gospel, APPLY it to all of life and SPEAK it to each other.

### **Start With You**

Shaping a Gospel Fluent Culture starts with you being regularly shaped by the truth of the Gospel. This means you have to KNOW it and APPLY it to everyday stuff, while asking others to SPEAK it into your life.

***Do you know the Gospel? Could you articulate it? Can you address everyday issues with the Gospel?***

If you know it and can articulate it, the next question is: ***Are you experiencing ongoing repentance and growing faith in the Gospel?***

This will look like you *"taking every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ"*. It means you are regularly checking your motives, beliefs, attitudes and actions to see if they reflect faith in Jesus or faith in someone or something else. This includes inviting others to have the freedom to speak openly into your life as well.

Then, when it is apparent that your faith is in something other than Jesus and what he accomplished for you through his life, death and resurrection, you need to be reminded how the Gospel shows Jesus to be the sufficient one for you in that issue, repent of unbelief and put your faith for that thing in Jesus and his sufficiency.

The more you are actively applying the Gospel to all of life, the more normal it will become to both speak of it and to equip others in it.

### **Lead Your Group Into Gospel-Centered Life**

You will need to lead in Gospel engagement ~~As in a variety of ways~~ in order to make Gospel conversations normative for your life together and your mission to make disciples of others. There are several ways you can make Gospel conversations more normative, but below are few suggestions to start with:

## 1. Rehearse the Gospel Regularly

Ask your group to regularly restate the elements of the Gospel out loud together to see how well they're getting it. You may have to lay it out for them a couple of times until they begin to remember it.

Here are three questions I ask to help people remember...

### Who is Jesus?

- He is the perfect man who lived a perfect life fully submitted to God the Father in all things
- He is the God-Man who is God in the flesh so that we could know what God is like and God would be near us
- He is the Messiah sent by God to save us from our sin, death and destruction

### What Did Jesus Do?

- On the cross, He exchanged his perfect obedience (His righteousness) for our sin so that those who have faith in Jesus get Jesus' righteousness credited to their account and their sin credited to His account
- When he died on the cross not only were my sins removed, but they were paid for (atoned for)
- He rose from the dead to show his power over sin and death (the wages of sin is death so Jesus' resurrection shows the debt is paid in full)
- He ascended to the right hand of God the Father from where he sent His Spirit to bring faith and new life to us, empowering us to live lives of obedience

### What Must We Do?

- Repent – Have a change of mind about who is God around here
- Believe – By faith put our trust in Who Jesus Is and What He Has done, believing it was accomplished for us
- Be Baptized – Publicly express our faith that our lives are now united and identified with God in Christ

### What Happens to Us?

- We are forgiven and cleansed of our sins
- We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit
- We are included in the forever Family of God
- We are commissioned to Make Disciples of Jesus

***How might you restate this to embody the language of your missional context?***

## **2. Apply the Gospel to Personal Stories**

Give each person in your Missional Community the opportunity to share their personal story. Before they do so, encourage them to tell it in light of what they believe about Jesus and how the Gospel has affected all of life. Also, encourage the group to listen with "Gospel Ears" paying close attention to areas where the Gospel has redeemed and rightly informed their story as well as where the Gospel needs to be spoken into their Story.

For example, if their story recounts a life without a father present or maybe a life with an abusive father, listen for where they came to see that they have a perfect Heavenly Father who was always present. If that doesn't come up, the group should ask them how they perceive the Father in Heaven and how knowing the truth about him sending the Son to save us shapes how they see this part of their story.

***What are some other key areas to be listening for when hearing each other's stories? How would you apply the Gospel to those areas?***

## **3. Go Through the Story-Formed Way**

The Story-formed Way was designed to both lead people through the basics of the Gospel and provide a foundational structure for the key doctrines of Christianity. If you are taking a mixed group of believers and unbelievers through it you will better establish the believers in the foundations and show them how to have Gospel conversations with Unbelievers. At the same time, the unbelievers are exposed to the Gospel and will learn how to share it themselves once they come to faith.

The other bonus of this activity is that it provides a variety of stories through which to see the Redemptive work of God thus giving the believer many different forms to engage in Gospel Conversation. For example, when dealing with someone struggling with financial provision, one could share the story of God feeding the Israelites in the wilderness and ultimately pointing to how Jesus is the bread of life that most deeply satisfies. Then go on to show that if God would give us his very best to meet our deep spiritual hunger, why wouldn't he also give us everything else that

we need. The more Biblical Stories we know, the more versatile we become in engaging in Gospel conversations.

***Name some other key Biblical Stories that relate well to your community and missional context and state how they point to Jesus.***

#### **4. Express Gospel Need and Fulfillment with Communion**

Have the communion elements ready to celebrate our Lord's Death. Then ask each person to particularly identify with one of the elements (the bread or the wine) and share how they are aware of their need for the gospel in light of how the bread or wine speaks to them. This gives each person the opportunity to express the Gospel in light of their need and how the Gospel satisfies their need.

For example, someone might say: I particularly identify with the bread this week because I am realizing that I have been trusting in my own works to make me righteous before God instead of trusting in the righteous life of Jesus lived on my behalf in human flesh. Or, someone might say, I am so grateful for the cup this week because I have been overcome with the reality of my sin this week and I need to be reminded that Christ blood was poured out for me for the forgiveness of my sins.

Before you begin this process, encourage each person to listen closely to the person on their right because they will be serving them the elements in light of the gospel need they expressed after everyone has shared. This gives each person the opportunity to listen for the Gospel need in others and then "preach" the gospel into their situation.

It might sound like, This bread is to remind you that Jesus' righteous life lived in his body that was given for you on the cross is the righteousness of God exchanged for your sin and His blood was poured out for you to forgive you of your sin, including trusting in your own righteousness.

Throughout the experience the group gets to hear the Gospel need proclaim several times and then observes several different Gospel proclamations specifically applied to a unique person and situation. At the end of the night, the group will have grown in their ability to express their Gospel need, listen for the Gospel need in another's life, proclaim the Gospel contextually into that person's life and situation AND listen to other people proclaim it as well.

***When you do this, take some time to write about your experience on the MC Leaders group on The City***



**5. Regularly ask, “How does the Gospel address this?” and, “What about the Gospel are you not believing?”**

Whenever life challenges or difficulties come up in the group’s conversation, instead of giving quick advice, ask, “How does the Gospel address this?” Train your group to regularly ask how Who Jesus Is and What He Has Done shapes how we handle the stuff of life. A couple of things will happen if you do this regularly: 1) You will teach the group that the Gospel really can and does address everything in life; 2) The group will become much more fluent in Gospel conversations the more they have them; and 3) You will learn over time if they are coming to know and believe the Gospel fully.

***What are some of the key issues that immediately come to your mind that seem to surface regularly in your group? How would you address them with the Gospel?***

**6. Slow Down to Identify Idols and Compare to Jesus**

As the group gathers, listen closely to the conversations and the stories. Listen for what they are ultimately putting their trust in – ask, “What idol/god are they putting their trust in?” Sometimes the best way to identify the idols of the heart is by calling people to ministry and mission. Idols become easiest to see when we are calling people to be faithful to Jesus’ mission. Listen for the excuses or reasons for not being willing or able to obey – fear, insecurities, selfishness, pride, approval of man issues, worship of children, family or work, etc...

Then, as you or the group becomes aware of the people or things that have become idols or “little gods” take the time to compare them to Jesus, showing Jesus to be the “better”; the resolution to what they are seeking elsewhere; the opposite of what they are experiencing; or the deeper reality of what they are searching for.

***What are some of the obvious “idols” in your group? How would you show that Jesus is the “better”?***

**7. Identify Key Descriptions of Jesus’ Work and Display them on Mission**

Take some time to talk through what is true of Jesus in the Gospel (i.e. Advocate, Mediator, Sacrificial Offering, etc...) and then discuss how the group might display this truth about Jesus in the midst of the missionary context, being prepared to share how this work is really a result and picture of what Jesus has done and is doing.

*In light of the missional context you have been sent to, what key descriptors of Jesus' identity and work if displayed would be Good News? How would you share the Gospel through that?*

**Assignment: Pick 3 of the 7 suggestions to try. Do the written work connected to them and plan to implement them in your group in the next 2 months. Turn your written work in to your Coach.**

