

SESSION 2 - UNDERSTAND

As we saw in session 1, the loving sacrifice of Christ not only saves us, but motivates us to seek the salvation of others. In this session, we'll spend a bit more time exploring and understanding the gospel of Christ, because the gospel is the foundation for reaching out to others. If we understand the gospel, we not only understand the message we believe, but also our God, ourselves and other people. If we understand the gospel, we understand why all people (including us) are in desperate need of rescue, and how God in his love and mercy has made that rescue possible through Jesus. If we understand the gospel, we are driven to:

- pray for people
- connect with people
- invite people to take positive steps forward in their relationship with God
- talk to people about what it means to be a Christian.

These are the next four steps in this course.

Let's begin to build our understanding by looking at one of the best summaries of the gospel in the Bible.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10.

1. According to verses 1-3, what is the spiritual condition of people before they become Christians?
2. Is there any hope for people in this situation? Why?
3. What has God done for these Christians to whom Paul is writing (vv. 4-6)?
4. What motivated God to do all this?

5. What does the future hold for those who are saved (v. 7)?
6. Verses 8-10 make it clear that salvation is a gift. What should people do in response to this gracious gift? What shouldn't people do in response to this gracious gift?

Video 1: The gospel—God's rescue mission

Go back and read 2 Corinthians 5:10-21 again

1. Verse 10 tells us that we will all appear before Christ. Why?
2. What has Christ done to make it possible for men and women to stand before him justified on that day (vv. 14, 19, 21)?
3. Paul tells us that "one has died for all, therefore all have died". In what way did Christ die for us?
4. What is the effect of this on our daily lives (vv. 15, 17, 20)?

Video 2: Christ our substitute

Understanding Jesus: The 4 R's

One easy way of remembering and explaining the gospel is to use Ephesians 2:1-10 as a foundation:

1. **Rebellion:** Ephesians 2:1-3
Everyone has rebelled against God. We “were dead in ... trespasses and sins” because we rejected God and followed our own desires and the spiritual forces of evil. The consequence of this is that we are under God’s judgement.
2. **Rescue:** Ephesians 2:4-5
Because of God’s love and mercy he sent Jesus to die so that we might be saved from judgement. Jesus’ death averts judgement and makes possible a new relationship with God.
3. **Resurrection:** Ephesians 2:6-7
Jesus did not stay dead—he was raised to new life as the ruler of God’s new people. God can make us alive together with Jesus so that we can enjoy the everlasting kindness of God in this world and into eternity.
4. **Response:** Ephesians 2:8-10
Salvation and new life are a free gift from God given to all those who turn back and put their trust in Jesus. As God’s new creations, our response should be to trust Jesus and live life in a way that pleases him. The question is, what is your response to this news going to be?

You could remember this outline and keep it in mind as you speak to people about Jesus. You could even open up this passage with someone and show them what the Bible actually says about our rebellion and God’s rescue plan.

The 4 R's outline is meant to get you started in the right direction. If you want to gain more confidence in understanding and explaining the gospel then we recommend you do a seven-week training course called *Two Ways to Live: Know and share the gospel* (from Matthias Media). In that course, you learn the gospel more thoroughly using the *Two Ways to Live* gospel outline; and then you learn how to adapt

that presentation to your own natural style of speech for use in an everyday conversation. You also learn about the different responses people make to the gospel, the different paths a conversation might take once you have explained the gospel to someone, and how to help someone become a Christian.

Discuss

What does the gospel message teach us:

- about God?
- about ourselves?
- about other people?

Video 3: Understand

To conclude

1. Pray together as a group, thanking God for the love and mercy he showed by sending Jesus to die for sinners, and asking him to help you share that message of mercy with those around you.
2. Divide into pairs again (with different people from last week) and have another go at sharing your story of how you came to be a follower of Jesus. Again, it doesn't have to be slick or clever. This time, see if you can do it in one minute.