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**Core Seminar**

**Two Ways to Live**

**Class 1: Introduction & God—Loving Ruler & Creator**

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**Introduce yourself and co-teacher**

**PRAYER**

#### I. Introduction On Evangelism

#### Over the course of this Two Ways to Live core seminar, we are seeking to unpack, understand, and articulate the Gospel message. We will spend one week looking at each point of the Two Ways to Live Tract (these should be handed out). Basically, Two Ways to Live is a class designed for two purposes. 1) to help solidify the content of the gospel in our own minds and 2) so that we might go out and share it with others (1 Peter 3:15). This morning, I want to give an introduction to the topic of evangelism generally. Then we’ll start a six week process of working through the Two Ways to Live tract.

###### A. Faith Comes By Hearing

To start, I want those of you who are Christians to think about the circumstances in which you heard and believed the gospel. Who explained this message to you? [*Give your own testimony as an example*. *Get a few other examples from the class of how they became Christians. Make it clear that you don’t expect everyone in the room to be a Christian—but you assume a lot are.*]

I ask this to point to the fact that all Christians have had this message proclaimed to them. Our stories aren’t all that unique. All Christians have had the gospel presented to them, whether by family members, friends, or complete strangers. There is no such thing as a Christian who has never heard the gospel. That’s why it’s so important that we share this message with others.

And that’s why the primary goal of this class is to equip us to share the gospel with others. So as we go through these six weeks, let’s keep that in our minds. Faith comes from hearing – hearing the word of Christ – and God has chosen Christians to be the instruments through which others are to hear the gospel.

To begin our time together, I want us to spend some time thinking about what evangelism is.

###### B. What Is Evangelism?

So then, what is evangelism[[1]](#footnote-1)?

J.I. Packer writes that evangelism is “**To present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to sinful people, with the aim that they may come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Savior, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church.**”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Breaking it down, evangelism is to present a specific message (the gospel of Jesus Christ) to a specific people (lost men and women), in the power of the Holy Spirit, with a specific purpose (the aim that they would repent and believe and be saved to God’s glory).

###### C. What Is Evangelism NOT?

Well, if that’s what evangelism is, then what is evangelism not? In other words, what are some things that can be confused with evangelizing? (List on board) [*Personal testimony; Apologetics or debate; Judging or shaming; Helping the poor; Doing good works before others; Raising good children*]

***Why aren’t these things considered evangelism?*** [*They mostly express the fruit of the gospel (or its implications), but they don’t proclaim the gospel itself. They also don’t make a call for repentance and belief. Merely feeding the poor isn’t proclaiming the way to salvation through Jesus Christ. The gospel is fundamentally good news, and evangelizing isn’t talking about me and what I’ve done, but about Christ and what he’s done. As Romans 10:17 says, faith comes by hearing*.[[3]](#footnote-3)]

Now this doesn’t mean that it doesn’t matter how we live as Christians. Our lives are to give testimony to the truths we proclaim. We ought to speak God’s word as those who are truly living out God’s word. Scripture says that we’re to be the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing (2 Corinthians 2:15). One person noted that, “**The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips and then walk out the door and deny him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable**.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

##### D. Who Is Called to Evangelize?

Now that we’ve thoroughly explained evangelism, who gets to do it? Quite simply, every Christian. This grand task is our task to obey and enjoy!

At the end of Christ’s earthly ministry in Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus says to his disciples, “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age**.”

Then in Acts we see the church doing this very thing. Acts 8:1-4 says, “**On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, *and all except the apostles* were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. … *Those who* *had been scattered preached the word wherever they went***.”

Christian, rejoice that God has chosen to entrust His message of salvation to you. We who’ve received the bread of life must show others where to get this bread and so have true life. And I hope this class by God’s Spirit will help give you the knowledge and courage to do so.

One of the best stories about someone resigning their lives to proclaiming the gospel is John Paton. He was a missionary in the 1800s to the New Hebrides (heh-breh-deez)[[5]](#footnote-5). When he was getting ready to go over to the New Hebrides from Scotland, some men were trying to deter him. One Mr. Dickson exploded saying, “**The Cannibals! You will be eaten by Cannibals!**”

To this Paton responded, “**Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my resurrection body will arise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer**.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

May we have that same attitude when it comes to evangelism. We only have one life. Let’s use it to honor God and to proclaim the good news about him.

**E. What Is Successful Evangelism?**

So then, since we’re all called to evangelize, we must know something about whether we’re doing the right thing or not. We must have a measurement that tells us what successful evangelism is.

For some, evangelism is only successful if you “convert” the person, if you can get them to walk down an aisle or repeat a prayer after you. But is this really what we’re after? Is this our responsibility as Christians, to “get the job done?” No, not according to the Bible. Unless we’re willing to say that Jesus, who was perfect, failed in evangelism, since not all of his listeners came to faith.

Successful evangelism can be broken down into three basic questions:

1. **Are you presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ accurately?** Are your words true or do you dumb down parts, such as the wickedness of sin or the cost of following Jesus, to make it more appealing to your hearer? I pray that this seminar will impress upon each of you a better understanding of why each truth in the gospel is important to the message as a whole.
2. **Are you sharing the gospel with lost people?** Which non-Christians in your life have never heard the gospel from you? Who are you praying about to share the gospel with? Are you making the most of every opportunity with your unbelieving friends and family?

Why don’t we share the gospel? (List on board) [*Fear of man; Don’t know the gospel well enough to articulate it; Busyness; Only have Christian friends*]

Well, all these things deal with our own failures, but the remedy is found in trusting God through obedience, which brings us to our next question…

1. **Are you relying on the power of the Holy Spirit?** Only God performs the miraculous work of bringing the dead to life. We’re called to share, to plant and water the seed, but to leave the growth to God. It’s not for us to try to manipulate another person into heaven. No matter what we get them to say with their lips, getting them to heaven is God’s job, not ours. And that should lead us to pray.

Prayer is God’s ordained means to sovereignly open doors and soften hearts. Prayer also reminds us that any fruit from evangelism comes from God alone. He gets the glory!

Now if you’re saying “yes” to these three questions, then you’re being successful in evangelism, regardless of the outcome. This is exactly what Paul was writing to the church in Colosse about. Colossians 4:2-6 read,

**2*Continue steadfastly in prayer*, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3At the same time, pray also for us, that *God may open to us a door for the word*, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4*that I may make it clear*, which is how I ought to speak. 5Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making *the best use of the time*. 6Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.**

**F. Concluding Remarks on Evangelism**

One more thought before we get into the Two Ways to Live material. This class is for anybody, whether you are a new Christian, not a Christian, or have been following Christ for 40 years. The gospel is not a once-and-done thing. It’s the essence of becoming a Christian, but it’s also what continues to sustain us as a believer throughout our whole lives. So just begin where you are as you go through this seminar, even if you’re hearing these truths for the first time.

If you know the story of Andrew and Philip, after they encountered Jesus, they immediately went and got their brothers. The Samaritan woman at the well, after she encountered Jesus, immediately went to the town to tell people about Jesus. Know this: this side of heaven, you will never fully grasp the gospel. You will never fully live out the perfect life that commends Jesus Christ. But you can still point others to him. And, if you’re a Christian, you must.

OK. Enough intro. Let’s get into the gospel. My goal for this class is for each of you to be ready to clearly articulate the gospel whenever it might come up in conversation. And so we’ll start at the beginning of the gospel—which is God. But before we do that, I want us to think about the value of this kind of tract. You don’t need something like Two Ways to Live to share the gospel. You might simply read through the book of Mark with someone—or the first few chapters of Romans. But we can *also* use something like this. Sometimes we might use the booklet; other times we might use it from memory. Of course, I have my own ideas of why a canned presentation of the gospel like this might be useful—that’s why I’m teaching this class. But I’m guessing you do as well. ***Why is it useful to get to know a presentation of the gospel like Two Ways to Live?***

[answers you want to cover: (1) helps make sure we’re being clear; (2) helps us jump into the gospel from many different vantage points; (3) allows us to summarize the gospel quickly—which sometimes is all we have time for.]

**Questions or Comments?**

**II. God—the Loving Ruler & Creator**

I believe that among all of the gospel presentations out there, the best ones begin with the One who was at the beginning and who is the center of all things. They begin with God.

Before we can talk about sin, we must know whom we’ve sinned against. And before we talk about salvation in Christ, we need to know where he was sent from; who sent him. And to talk about heaven, we need to know who created heaven and who the object of worship in heaven is.

So we begin with God. (*Draw only the crown*)

 

Who is God? If someone you’re speaking to asked you who God is or what He’s like, how would you answer him?

The study of God is, of course, inexhaustible. But for our purposes today, I’ll just mention two fundamental descriptions of God.

God is our 1) creator and 2) loving ruler. A great verse to use that communicates this truth is Revelation 4:11: “**You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being**.”

God is the loving ruler of the world. He created the world. And He created man to be rulers of the world under Him. (*Finish drawing the picture*)

God is the very important first point we want to communicate clearly and accurately in our gospel presentation. And Revelation 4:11 is a great verse to begin with and memorize for two reasons:

1. It makes the statement that God is the creator; He is the author of all things.
2. Because He is the creator and author of all things, He is therefore worthy to receive glory and honor and power. These are the characteristics of a ruler.

But why is it important to begin a presentation of the gospel talking about God? Well, it’s His gospel. As Christians, we want to begin with God because we want to show that God is supreme. That we exist to the praise of God’s glory, not our own. We don’t naturally do this.

If we start with man (i.e. ourselves) and make God just a means to make man happy, then we’re missing the point. We’re placing man at the center, not God. Beginning with man, the gospel may seem more like a convenient, divine add-on rather than a complete change of worldview and transformation of lifestyle. In our individualistic, self-centered age, we need to recover this basic biblical idea. God is in rightful authority over us, and whether we like it or not, we’re accountable to Him – on His terms, not ours.

So let’s look to scripture to see how God holds these two positions we mentioned.

**A. God Is the Creator of All**

As we have mentioned, God created everything. You see, God alone is eternal. So while there once was a time when we didn’t exist, God still did. He has always been and always will be. He has no beginning and no end. And whereas everything in the universe is a created thing, God alone is self-existent. No one made God. He is independent of all things, but all things are dependent upon Him. This theme is carried throughout scripture:

* **Genesis 1:1** – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
* **Psalm 90:2** – “Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”
* **John 1:3** – “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."
* **Colossians 1:16** – “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him."

All that we know came into existence when God created it, and He did it for a purpose – for His glory. And so we begin where the Bible begins, with God.

**B. God Is the Ruler of All**

Since God created everything, without aid or counsel, he is the rightful ruler and owner and authority of everything.

* **Job 12:10** – “In [God’s] hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind."
* **Proverbs 21:1** – “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse where he pleases.”
* **Acts 17:25-28** – “And [God] is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live…For in him we live and move and have our being."[[7]](#footnote-7)

Every single thing that God created is under His rule. Every creature is under His rule. Every human is under His rule. Even the nations and its rulers and kings are under God’s rule. He is in control. That’s another reason why we begin with Him.

***Now, there are many different aspects of who God is that we could have talked about—but we chose to highlight him as Creator and Ruler. Why would those be of particular importance in a gospel presentation?***

**C. Man’s Relationship to God**

So if we begin with God, where do we come in? Well, we come into the picture at creation. According to the bible, we were created in God’s image, appointed to rule over the rest of creation. Genesis 1:27-28 says, “**So God created man in his own image…male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.””**

Notice that the Creation account places emphasis on man in relation to the earth. This emphasis protects against seeing man as meaningless, or a cosmic accident. God created man. And because God is the rightful ruler and authority over everything he creates, he is the rightful ruler and authority over man.

I know most of us don’t like to be told what to do. It can sometimes get under our skin when someone is directing us. But God has the right to do just that! Because he has created us, he has a claim on our lives. He calls us to live under his rule, to display his image, and demonstrate his glory to the world. He calls us to be in relationship with him and to submit to what he tells us and to love him above all else.

And the good thing is that God is not a cruel or a harsh ruler. He’s a loving and kind ruler and knows what is best for his creation in presiding over it. When Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the garden, he presented them with the lie that God could not be both their authority and loving at the same time. We’ll get into that more next week, but let me just be clear that we must not buy into Satan’s lie that God must be withholding good things from us. He created us to live under his rule, and no matter what we sometimes think, living under his rule is the best place to be. Living under God’s rule is much better than living under our rule or anybody else’s rule because we’re imperfect and make mistakes. But God is perfect.

Well, today we looked at God, Cell 1 of the Two Ways to Live tract. Next week, Lord willing, we’ll turn to man. In preparing ourselves to share the gospel, we must remember that our authority is the Word of God. That being the case, I would like to highly encourage you to memorize the one scripture text we’re going over each week. It will take you about 10 minutes to do. Memorize it on Monday and spend a minute to repeat it each day. Revelation 4:11, shown on your handout, is our first verse. [*Commend books to read shown on handout.*]

**Questions or Comments?**

**PRAYER**

###### APPENDIX

##### Introduction to Course

One way to begin the first class is to show the benefits of going through the course by doing a brief before-and-after skit. The following are examples:

Conversation Before 2Ways to Live

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOoMbsX0Rj8>

Coversation After Implementing the 2Ways to Live Framework

 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftZtaVIDoVM>

##### What Is the Message of Evangelism?

Now then, what is this specific message we are to present?

The message of good news begins with God as loving ruler and creator- he created the world and man. Revelation 4:11 says, *“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things. And by your will they were created and have their being.”*

God is worthy to receive glory and honor and power. He is the loving ruler and creator.

But man rebelled, wanting to be king. Man tried to run his own life his own way. In essence, man tried to dethrone God. Romans 3:10-12 says, *“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away; they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”*

But so what? We all know that “nobody’s perfect” and “to err is human.” What’s the big deal? The big and eternal deal is that God will not let people keep on rebelling against Him forever. He will one day call us to account for everything we have done. Hebrews 9:27 says, *“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.”* We will all die, and we will all face God’s judgment, a judgment according to God’s holy and righteous character and standard. Therefore, the punishment for rebellion against God is death and eternal torment in hell.

But God so loved the world, that he gave his One and Only Son, Jesus Christ, to come to earth as a man, to live the perfect life no one else could and thus deserving no punishment. Jesus Christ died on the cross, taking the punishment we deserve and providing the offer of forgiveness. 1 Peter 3:18 says, *“Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.”*

God accepted Jesus’ death as payment in full for sins of people like you and me and demonstrated His acceptance by raising Him from the dead. Jesus conquered death, and now gives new life. And one day Jesus will return to judge the world.

Philippians 2:9-11 says, *“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

And so, God demands a response. There are only two ways to live. Our way, by continuing to reject God as ruler, bringing condemnation, or God’s way, to repent and believe, submit to Christ as our Ruler, and rely on Jesus’ death and resurrection alone for salvation.

Friends, this message is the gospel in a nutshell, the good news about Jesus Christ! This good news is the specific message that the Christian brings to the lost world around him. And later today and in the coming weeks, we will be unpacking this glorious message.

1. The word “evangelist” (Gk *euangelistes)* is found three times in the New Testament (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5) and means a messenger (*angelos*) of good (*eu*) or good news. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. J.I. Packer, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God*, p. 37-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A famous quote opposing this idea is attributed to Francis of Assisi and says, “Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Brennan Manning. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. New Hebrides was the colonial name for an island group in the South Pacific east of Australia that now forms the nation of Vanuatu. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. John Piper, *Filling Up the Afflictions of Christ*, p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This is a great verse because Paul is evangelizing in Athens and starts with God. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)