



Why do we always talk about the Gospel?

In this study, we will do something a little different.

In the sermon, Kevin talked about how the gospel is good news for sinners, saints, sufferers and sojourners.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-5

1. According to Paul, what elements must we always include if we want to talk about “the gospel?” (v3-5)
2. Which of these statements is *the gospel*? (G) Which is *an implication of the gospel*? (I) What is the difference in focus between the gospel and its implications?
 - Jesus, through his justifying death, has washed away the sins of everyone who puts their faith in Him.
 - Christians shouldn't worry about anything.
 - Racial barriers are now destroyed so that God's people are one.
 - Jesus will come again to restore our broken world, to be enjoyed by those who wait for him.
 - If we repent and turn in faith to Christ, he will accept us.
 - Jesus is Lord and through his death and resurrection, he has defeated the power of sin, Satan, death, and the world.
3. Paul says “I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, **which you received, in which you stand and by which you are being saved...**”

NOTE:

To *stand* refers to being able to stand secure, withstanding opposition until victory is won. The opposite is to fall.

To *be saved* means to be restored into the life God created us to have and to live, in a deep abundant relationship with himself, others and our world around,



flourishing by reflecting his image in every area of our lives. Scripture sees salvation as a past event (you have been saved), an ongoing reality (you are being saved) and a future hope (you will be saved).

4. What does it look like for the following **not** to receive, not to stand and not to be saved? What lies are we tempted to believe?

- **A sinner** – in hearing the gospel
- **A saint** – in the midst of temptation
- **A sufferer** – in the midst of trials
- **A sojourner** – in the midst of uncertainty and waiting

E.g. a sinner will not receive the gospel message and so continue to live life self-reliantly on their own terms because they think Christianity is either simply as a set of moral principles or teachings to follow or that submitting to Jesus' authority will restrict their freedom.

5. How does the gospel of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and return enable us to stand, how does it 'save' us as saints, sufferers and sojourners?

Give examples of how you have seen each of these in your own life.

E.g. I felt so stuck and despairing as everyone around me was moving on with life (getting promotion or getting married) but I was left behind. I was tempted to believe that 'trusting God' was stupid. I'll miss out. I had to be more ruthless, more driven, take life into my own hands. But then a friend reminded me of the gospel that Jesus died so he would be my treasure, not my life circumstances. Christ will provide for me, he has done everything to secure my future. And that gave me hope and peace to refocus off myself and on to how Christ wanted me to use this period of my life.

6. Right now, what are the ways you are tempted not to stand? What lies are you tempted to believe about your circumstances?

7. What truths of the gospel do you need to hear and ask God to make real to your heart? What gospel promises do you need to keep claiming at this time?

In small groups:

Share and Pray these truths over each other.



Why do we... take communion?

In our series “Why do we do that?” Chris preached on 1 Cor. 11:17-34, the Bible’s longest passage about communion which Christians have celebrated from the beginning. He explained different ways how in communion we celebrate Jesus (see question 3 for details), which is powerfully expressed in the symbols of bread and cup.

The reason Paul writes is that the Corinthian church was a mess and so they took communion “in an unworthy manner”, which actually led to them being disciplined through sickness and premature death (v30)! So Chris encouraged us to take communion seriously, not flippantly, through examining ourselves, but also joyfully because after all we are celebrating the gospel.

Questions

1. What struck you from the sermon?
2. In light of today’s sermon, how would you have described the way you took communion in the past? (E.g. *vertical vs horizontal, serious vs flippant...*)
3. What are some ways that communion celebrates Jesus? Think of the following phrases and what they mean:
 - “This is my body, broken for you”
 - “This cup is the new covenant in my blood”
 - “You proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”

Is there anything that particularly speaks to something going on in your life at the moment?

There is more, but these three stand out. Jesus:

- **set us free** (v23-24 - it fulfils the Passover/Seder meal, celebrating redemption from slavery - particularly Jesus’ broken body fulfils the broken bread of the meal)
- **made us his own covenant people** (v25 - in Exodus 24, blood poured out and a meal was part of the covenant ceremony between Israel and the LORD)
- **will come again to restore the world** (v26 - the little meal is a foretaste of the wedding supper we will share when Jesus returns)



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4. In light of what was shared: if you served this brother or sister communion, what would you say to encourage them in the gospel when you give them the bread and/or cup?

E.g. someone feeling they don't belong in the community - "Annie, this is the blood of Christ. He shed it to welcome you and make us all one people. Take this and remember how we are all one family in Christ."

5. What was going on in Corinth to warrant Paul's rebuke in v17-22? What aspect of the gospel did they miss? What are ways we might act similarly today?

A few clues: divisions (v18), some go hungry while others get drunk (v21), humiliating those who have nothing (v22), the solution is to wait for one another (v33). It looks like a social division between rich and poor from society that is being perpetuated in the church. The rich eat everything and get drunk while the poor have nothing. Commentators suggest the latter are slaves, who come off work late at night. Once they get to church the free, rich people have already finished up all the food and wine, hence the command to "wait for one another".

What they forgot was how Jesus' death made us one new people, and the old divisions no longer apply, as we are all equally welcome to Jesus' table through the cross. Taking this symbol of inclusion and turning it into one of exclusion of the marginalized really mocked Christ.

6. Why is Paul so adamant that we examine ourselves and discern "the body"? Have you ever thought that you can mock Christ in the way you take communion and suffer consequences for it? How does that make you feel?

Jesus takes communion seriously. Quite scary that many of the Corinthians got sick or even died because they took it while sinning against their church family. For many of us it is just a ritual so this should wake us up and make sure we take it seriously. Paul's command is that we examine ourselves.

For them, the issue was their relationships with their brothers and sisters, discerning "the body" of Christ. We should check our hearts to see whether we have any unresolved issues with others in the church. But it equally applies to other sins, so things like:



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- *Are we trusting in Jesus for salvation? (one reason why only Christians can take it)*
 - *Is there habitual, wilful disobedience in our lives? Etc*
7. Johnny is in your CG and examines himself thoroughly before taking communion. Usually he doesn't go up and take it as he is so aware of his sin. What might be going on in his heart? How would you encourage him?

There is a danger with examining ourselves that we feel we have to be 'good enough' for communion, and maybe that is going on for Johnny. But he misses that the gospel is about grace, not about being good enough. We bring our sin to the table, he brings his body and blood. You can encourage him by reminding him what communion represents, how Jesus gave his life for our sin so that we don't need to be good enough. We can come as thankful sinners and receive his grace.

8. What changes will you make in how you prepare for and take communion in response to this passage? Individually? As a group?

E.g. CG leaders notify people in advance of communion, encouraging the group to examine themselves; intentionally look around and smile at my brothers and sisters; etc



Why do we... give finances to God's kingdom

2 Corinthians 8:1-15, 9:6-15

Recap

The question is *why do we give financially to God's kingdom*. For those who weren't there: this is not because the church is in financial need, and we don't speak often about it. There are also different areas of giving the Bible addresses (local church, mission, the poor, family), and this is mainly the middle two, which are more about generosity and less about responsibility.

Kevin spoke from the famous 2 Corinthians 8-9. Paul is holding a collection for (Jewish) Christians in Jerusalem, who are experiencing a famine. The Corinthians had started saving to participate in this, but there was some conflict between the Corinthians and Paul. He needs to encourage them to still take part. Giving is:

- **An act of grace** (8:1, 6, 7 etc – the grace we receive we naturally pass on to others)
- **An act of faith** (8:2-3 – it requires trust in God)
- **An act of worship** (8:5 – the Macedonians gave themselves first to the Lord)
- **An act of kingdom advancement** (9:10-11 – spiritual results from your giving)
- **An act of uncommon love** (9:12 – Gentiles to give money to poor Jews shows the power of the gospel and the love and unity it creates)

The question is *what stops us being generous*. Usually there is something else in our hearts. Maybe we want comfort, and giving money takes away from our lifestyle. We want security, and giving takes away from that. So this is an opportunity for our hearts to be freed by the gospel to be more generous.

Questions

1. "Why do we give finances to God's kingdom" – before Sunday how would you have answered that? How do people generally answer that?

Good to share. Could just be because it's commanded, or it's necessary to keep the church working. Worse is to earn favour/blessing. Or just good reasons – out of love or thankfulness...



2. Look through the passage (maybe in small groups – some do 8:1-15, others 9:6-15). In what ways does Paul motivate the Corinthians to give? Anything in what he says that surprises you?

Various ones: the example of the Macedonians; it's for their own good; Jesus' grace on the cross; love for others; the result for us ourselves; the spiritual results for the kingdom... see recap

3. The word 'grace' is repeated constantly, and their giving is 'an act of grace' (e.g. 8:6). How can something *we* do be an act of grace? How does this encourage you?

God's grace is supposed to have an effect on us. God shows us his grace and it transforms us and makes us generous like him. It is an outflow of God's grace rather than something that comes from ourselves. And that's encouraging because it is something beautiful that we couldn't change ourselves but God will do in and through us.

4. What are some ways money is idolized in Hong Kong? Any ways we feel susceptible to personally?

Lots of ways. Money makes people secure and self-sufficient. Money brings status in society. Money is the key to a comfortable lifestyle. Money brings parents' approval etc...

5. Imagine one of these scenarios (or both one by one).

- You try to get cash from the ATM but you can't. You check and notice your account has suddenly less than \$500 in it.
- There is a new social justice initiative the church wants to start and so we are asking for a significant love offering.

What is your initial response, and what does it perhaps show about your heart?

Practical examples. The first might raise up fears of trouble, rattling our feeling of security, or anger how this could happen, when we want everything to be under control. The second maybe make us resentful when we are saving for a new gadget, or feeling if we don't do this God will be displeased, or it feels like a waste of money...



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6. How does the gospel answer these fears and idols? What verses from the passage (or elsewhere) can you use to preach to yourself?

Great verses in the passage that we can apply, e.g.

- **Security** – 9:8, God is able to make all grace abound to you
- **Satisfaction** – 9:11 you'll be enriched in every way, it will produce thanksgiving to God
- **Pressure** – 9:7, God loves a cheerful giver. 8:12, it's about what you have, not what you don't have
- **Feeling God is demanding** – 8:9, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

7. How do you think Jesus wants you to follow up from today's study?

E.g. prayer for more Christ-like generosity; find help to create a budget; seek accountability; time with Jesus to learn to trust him more...