

God and the Gospel's Effectiveness

The gospel is the power of God to save – though it may seem foolish to the world

[PAUL:] For I am not ashamed of *the gospel*, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [ROMANS 1:16](#) NET

[PAUL:] For *the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* [1 CORINTHIANS 1:18](#) NET

The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God's power

[PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIANS:] *My conversation and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith would not be based on human wisdom but on the power of God.* [1 CORINTHIANS 2:4-5](#) NET

The effectiveness of Paul's message was not due to any great display of wisdom on his part, but to the Holy Spirit and God's power, working through him and in the minds of his listeners.

The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus Christ to people, fostering belief

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] When the Advocate comes, whom I will send you from the Father – *the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father – he will testify about me, ²⁷and you also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.* [JOHN 15:26-27](#) NET

The Holy Spirit testifies to non-believers about the reality of Jesus Christ and the truth of the gospel message. He does this often through believers as they tell others the gospel (which Jesus quite possibly alludes to here). This work of the Holy Spirit is crucial to the effectiveness of the gospel's proclamation (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3).

God and Jesus at times confirm the gospel message by miracles

They [Paul and Barnabas] spoke boldly about the Lord, who confirmed their message about his good will by having them perform miracles and do amazing things. [ACTS 14:3](#) GW

CHAPTER 35

Spreading the Gospel

I. Instructions

Tell People the Gospel.....	292
What Things to Explain	292
How to Spread the Message.....	294
Supplementary Actions.....	295

II. Insights

Insights on the Gospel Message	296
The Need to Spread the Gospel.....	297
God and the Gospel's Effectiveness	298

I. Instructions

The theme of spreading the gospel pervades the NT and should be a key focus in our lives. This section largely looks at what we need to say and do, in advancing the spread of the gospel.

Tell People the Gospel

Tell people the gospel message about Jesus Christ

Then Philip began to speak, and, starting from this Scripture, *he told him* [an Ethiopian] *the good news about Jesus.* ACTS 8:35 ISV

[PAUL:] Timothy, our brother, works with us for God and *helps us tell people the Good News about Christ.* 1 THESSALONIANS 3:2B NCV™

Tell all people, everywhere

Then he [Jesus] told them: *Go and preach the good news to everyone in the world. ...*²⁰*Then the disciples left and preached everywhere.* MARK 16:15, 20A CEV

Do not be ashamed of the gospel

[PAUL:] *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* ROMANS 1:16 NET

What Things to Explain

Explain who Jesus Christ is

Soon he [Paul] went to the Jewish meeting places and started *telling people that Jesus is the Son of God.* ACTS 9:20 CEV

Paul became wholly absorbed with proclaiming the word, *testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.* ACTS 18:5B NET

[PETER, TO A CROWD OF LARGELY JEWS:] Therefore *let all the house of Israel know beyond a doubt that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.* ACTS 2:36 NET

The Need to Spread the Gospel

We are responsible for telling others the gospel

[PAUL:] *For I have an obligation to all peoples, to the civilized and to the savage, to the educated and to the ignorant.* ¹⁵*So then, I am eager to preach the Good News to you also who live in Rome.* ROMANS 1:14-15 GNT

Like Paul, believers have an obligation or responsibility to tell all people – people of all nations and levels of understanding.

Through believers spreading the gospel others come to believe

[JESUS:] I'm not praying only for them [the disciples]. I'm also praying for *those who will believe in me through their message.* JOHN 17:20 GW

But a lot of people who had heard the message believed it. ACTS 4:4A CEV

There are many people ready to respond to the gospel – but they need someone to tell them

When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were bewildered and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.* ³⁸*Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."* MATTHEW 9:36-38 NET

There are many ready to respond to the gospel – to be "harvested". But more workers are needed to proclaim the gospel to them.

The gospel brings salvation, saving those who respond to it

[PAUL, TO THE EPHESIAN BELIEVERS:] And you also became God's people when you heard the true message, *the Good News that brought you salvation.* EPHESIANS 1:13A GNT

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] Go into all the world and *preach the gospel to every creature.* ¹⁶*The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned.* MARK 16:15B-16 NET

II. Insights

This section provides insights on the gospel message itself and on why it is so critical that we tell others the gospel. It also teaches us that in all our efforts to do so, we must bear in mind that the effectiveness of the message comes from God – and that people’s responses to it are in his hands, not ours.

Insights on the Gospel Message

The gospel is not made up by men – it is true

[PAUL:] Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that *the gospel I preached is not of human origin.* ¹²*For I did not receive it or learn it from any human source; instead I received it by a revelation of Jesus Christ.* GALATIANS 1:11-12 NET

But Paul replied, “I have not lost my mind, most excellent Festus, but *am speaking true and rational words.* ²⁶*For the king knows about these things, and I am speaking freely to him, because I cannot believe that any of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner.* ACTS 26:25-26 NET

Verse 26 makes a very important point attesting to the truth of the gospel. The events it is based on were widely known, familiar to the king, as they did not take place in some obscure setting.

The gospel reveals God’s secret plan concerning Jesus Christ

[PAUL:] To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, *to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,* ⁹*and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ...* EPHESIANS 3:8B-9 ESV

The gospel is good news

God sent his word to the people of Israel and brought them *the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ.* ACTS 10:36A GW

Note that the Greek word which is often translated as “gospel” basically means “good news”.

Tell people about Jesus’ death and resurrection . . .

[PAUL:] *I passed on to you what I received, which is of the greatest importance: ⁴that Christ died for our sins, as written in the Scriptures; ⁵that he was buried and that he was raised to life three days later, as written in the Scriptures; that he appeared to Peter and then to all twelve apostles.* 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-5 GNT

. . . and tell people about the results

What we mean is that *God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world. And he has given us the work of sharing his message about peace.* 2 CORINTHIANS 5:19 CEV

We are to tell others that because of Jesus Christ’s death, their sins can be forgiven and they can be at peace with God.

Tell people about the kingdom of God

From morning until evening he [Paul] explained things to them, testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus from both the law of Moses and the prophets. ACTS 28:23B NET

Tell people about what God is like and what he has done . . .

Sing to the LORD! Bless his name! *Proclaim his deliverance every day! ³Declare his glory among the nations and his awesome deeds among all the peoples!* PSALMS 96:2-3 ISV

This illustrates that we should proclaim God’s salvation, glory and marvelous deeds to all people and nations.

. . . and tell what God has done for you

[JESUS, TO A MAN HE HAD HEALED:] “*Return to your home, and declare what God has done for you.*” *So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole town what Jesus had done for him.* LUKE 8:39 NET

Tell people how they should respond

[PAUL:] *To Jews and Gentiles alike I gave solemn warning that they should turn from their sins to God and believe in our Lord Jesus.* ACTS 20:21 GNT

How to Spread the Message

Present the gospel accurately and plainly

He [Apollos] had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and with great enthusiasm *he spoke and taught accurately the facts about Jesus*, although he knew only the baptism of John. [ACTS 18:25](#) NET

[PAUL:] We use no trickery, and *we do not change the teaching of God. We teach the truth plainly*, showing everyone who we are. Then they can know in their hearts what kind of people we are in God's sight. [2 CORINTHIANS 4:2B](#) NCV™

Spread the gospel by the Holy Spirit

They [past prophets] were shown that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things now announced to you through *those who proclaimed the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit* sent from heaven – things angels long to catch a glimpse of. [1 PETER 1:12](#) NET

Spreading the gospel by the Holy Spirit involves relying on the Holy Spirit's guidance and power (cf. [1 Corinthians 2:4-5](#)).

Spread the gospel boldly – with God's help

So he [Saul] was staying with them, associating openly with them in Jerusalem, *speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord*. [ACTS 9:28](#) NET

[PAUL, TO THE THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS:] As you remember, we had been mistreated and insulted at Philippi. *But God gave us the courage to tell you the good news about him, even though many people caused us trouble*. [1 THESSALONIANS 2:2](#) CEV

Work hard at spreading the gospel message

[PAUL:] So we preach Christ to everyone. With all possible wisdom we warn and teach them in order to bring each one into God's presence as a mature individual in union with Christ. *²⁹To get this done I toil and struggle, using the mighty strength which Christ supplies and which is at work in me*. [COLOSSIANS 1:28-29](#) GNT

Note that here Paul is probably referring to his evangelistic work in spreading the gospel as well as to his pastoral work amongst Christians.

Supplementary Actions

Pray for your proclamation of the gospel . . .

[THE EARLY BELIEVERS:] And now, Lord, pay attention to their threats, and *grant to your servants to speak your message with great courage, ³⁰while you extend your hand to heal, and to bring about miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.*" ³¹*When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God courageously.* [ACTS 4:29-31](#) NET

. . . and pray for others who proclaim the gospel

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Be sure to pray that God will make a way for us to spread his message and explain the mystery about Christ*, even though I am in jail for doing this. ⁴*Please pray that I will make the message as clear as possible.* [COLOSSIANS 4:3-4](#) CEV

Pray for the salvation of unbelievers

[PAUL:] Brothers and sisters, *my heart's desire and prayer to God on behalf of my fellow Israelites is for their salvation*. [ROMANS 10:1](#) NET

Act in the interests of others for the sake of the gospel

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Just do as I do; I try to please everyone in all that I do, not thinking of my own good, but of the good of all, so that they might be saved.* [1 CORINTHIANS 10:33](#) GNT

Act in a way that is consistent with the gospel

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ* so that – whether I come and see you or whether I remain absent – I should hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, by contending side by side for the faith of the gospel, ... [PHILIPPIANS 1:27](#) NET

Conducting oneself "in a manner worthy of the gospel" – a manner consistent with its message – is an important aspect of "contending... for the faith of the gospel".

Pray for persecuted Christians