

A Rich, But Simple Model For Sharing The Gospel

IT'S not easy to share the Gospel briefly and do justice to its glory and majesty at the same time. In our morning devotions we are enamoured with the infinite depth of the Gospel. But a few hours later we stutter as we try to share it over a cup of coffee, during a break at work or at the end of a sermon.

But what if we can do both? What if we can share the Gospel in a few minutes and maintain at least some level of its depth and richness?

If we can do that, Gospel renewal will spread through our churches and neighbourhoods. This will happen because people will hear a message about Jesus that is different (but more biblical!) than the one they rejected years ago. They will hear a message with power.

Where do we go for this rich but simple model for sharing the Gospel? We need look no further than Ephesians 1.3-14.

Paul's Trinitarian Gospel Presentation

In the opening verses of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul summarises the Gospel. But he does so in a unique way. Paul presents the Gospel so as to show how each Person of the Trinity contributes to the accomplishment of salvation.

1. The Father Adopts (1.3-6). The fact that we need to be adopted implies that we are orphans. We have all 'run away from home.' Just as Adam and Eve hid from God after eating from the tree so also, in sin, we have all hidden from God. As spiritual runaways we have no way to return to our Father. We are locked up in the orphanage of sin. But our Father still loves us. He hasn't forgotten about us. He has planned from eternity to adopt us back into His family.

2. The Son Redeems (1.7-12). As with all adoptions, there are costs and fees involved. God had to purchase our adoption. Jesus, God's true Son – the only one who didn't run away – gave His life to pay the cost of our adoption. Our sins are forgiven on the basis of Jesus' blood.

3. The Spirit Seals (1.13-14). How do we know we won't run away again? The Holy Spirit seals us as God's own children. By giving us the Spirit, our Father guarantees that we will be His forever. This is not much different from the parents who immediately bestow their last name on the child they have just adopted. That's the proof that the child has a family forever. And the sealing of the Spirit is the proof that we are in God's family forever.

Paul's Model Is As Timely Today As It Was 2,000 Years Ago.

Besides providing a framework for sharing the Gospel, Ephesians 1 contains two themes that address common unbiblical beliefs held by those without faith in Jesus.

1. Sin Is The Problem. When we share the Gospel, how often does the conversation turn to politics, social injustice, or natural disasters? Ephesians 1 locates the problem inside us, not 'out there.' We ran away, and that sin condemns us forever.

2. Jesus Is At The Centre. Postmodernism may be dead, but pluralism is alive and well. We will continue to hear claims that all roads lead to God somehow. All of the 'in Christ' and 'in him' statements refute this notion (only verses 8 and 14 have no such reference!). Salvation lies only in Jesus and through Jesus.

This model is enriched by the mysterious workings of the Triune God. He is one God, in three Persons, with each Person fulfilling a unique role in the single work of salvation. This is incomprehensible stuff. Yet it is also simple.

It's a three-point presentation, so you can remember it. It follows the analogy of adoption, so the person you share it with can identify with it.

This model doesn't hit everything. But the point isn't to hit everything. That will paralyse us from sharing the Gospel. We need something that is rich and simple. Paul provides that for us.

*– This is a guest post on gospelcoalition.com by Eric McKiddie.
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