

# Jot & Tittle

*A Journal Devoted to the Study of the Inspired Word of God*

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## **Biblical Gospel Illustrations**

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The gospel in its simplest terms is the life-changing message of Jesus' death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Jesus died for our sins and rose to give us life. We enter into that life through faith in this simple message. Technically, the English term "gospel" comes from the Anglo Saxon word *godspell* which means "good story."<sup>1</sup> This term reflects the New Testament Greek word *euangelion*, or "good news,"<sup>2</sup> from which we get our word "evangelism." The gospel is good news. Since Christians have entered into life with God through faith in this good news it only makes sense to share this good news with others. Often it's best to communicate the gospel message with illustrations from everyday life. In fact, the Bible itself uses several illustrations that Christians today can adapt in their own evangelistic efforts.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Good News/Bad News***

Based on the definition of the gospel itself as "good news," Christians can describe the bad news and the good news about people's hearts. We hear about bad news every day in the newspapers, on television, and in the social media. Likewise, there's some bad news about our hearts. We harbor sin that separates us

from God. But there's also good news. Jesus died to take away that sin and to restore us to spiritual health and life (compare Ephesians 2:11-13).

### ***A Bridge***

In His parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus portrayed humankind's spiritual condition as separation from God—a great chasm stands between God and us (Luke 16:26). Our sins have separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2). Trying to jump across a great chasm, such as the Grand Canyon, is humanly impossible. We would need a bridge. Jesus is that bridge. His cross connects us to God, and when we cross that bridge by faith we are restored to fellowship with God.

### ***A Gift***

Romans 6:23 describes eternal life in Christ Jesus as a gift from God. Everyone enjoys receiving a gift, whether at Christmas or on a birthday. In fact, it would be an insult to the giver for us to reject a special gift. The giver wants us to unwrap and enjoy the gift. In the same way God has given us the best gift. He's given us eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ. Instead of rejecting that gift, and thereby further insulting God, we should receive and enjoy it by faith.

### ***A Relationship***

The Bible frequently uses relational terms to describe people of faith. Christians are "brothers and sisters" (Matthew 12:50; 1 Timothy 5:1-2). The church is the "bride of Christ" (Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 19:7-8). In today's culture an intentional relationship like marriage can become an illustration of the gospel. When a young man chooses a bride he presents her with a ring and an invitation to become his wife, to become a part of his life. In the same way God has invited us to become a part of His eternal family. He has "proposed" to us. When we say "yes" to Him through faith we become a part of His family forever.

## ***A Balanced Check Book***

Second Corinthians 5:21 describes salvation as a transfer of sin and righteousness between Jesus Christ and Christians. Romans 4:23-24 states this concept in financial terms. We, through faith in Jesus, have been credited with His righteousness. God put our sins on Jesus and He places Jesus' righteousness on us. In our culture a bank account or a check book can illustrate this idea. Our sins put us in debt to God, an astronomical debt that we can never repay. When Jesus died on the cross He took our sins on Himself, transferring our debt to His account. Furthermore, when we receive Jesus by faith He deposits His righteousness into our account. Instead of being burdened by our sins we stand as righteous in God's sight.

## ***Your Personal Faith Story***

Twice in the book of Acts the apostle Paul recited his conversion experience as a way to express his faith to unbelievers (Acts 22:1-16; 26:12-18). His basic presentation included a description of his life before he met Jesus, his encounter with Jesus, and the changes in his life after having received Jesus. Christians today can also use their personal faith story—their testimony—to describe the gospel to others. We can talk about what our lives were like before we met Jesus, how we encountered Jesus, and what difference Jesus has made in our lives.

## ***The Romans Road***

The "Romans Road" refers to a logical presentation of the gospel based on four verses in the book of Romans. Romans 3:23 reminds us that we have all sinned and fallen short of God's moral greatness. Romans 6:23 warns that the penalty for our sins is death, both physical and eternal. Romans 5:8 states that even in our fallen condition God loves us and sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins on the cross. Romans 10:13 promises that everyone who calls on Jesus by faith will be saved. Walking someone through these verses from an open Bible can clarify the gospel message and wield the power of the Word of God in its presentation.

## ***John 3:16***

It's not uncommon for people in our culture to be familiar with John 3:16—possibly the best known verse in the entire Bible. Mentioning this verse and its basic content is a simple way to share the gospel. John 3:16 says that God loves us and therefore sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us. When we believe in Jesus we move from a position of judgment to a position of eternal life with God.

The Bible provides us with several practical illustrations for presenting the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. As Jesus' followers, we should become familiar with such illustrations and be prepared to use them when God provides an opportunity for us to witness for Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1975, p. 420.

<sup>2</sup> Bauer, Walter; Arnt, William F.; Gingrich, F. Wilbur; Danker, Frederick W. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 317.

<sup>3</sup> The author makes no claims to originality in presenting these illustrations but draws on his gleanings from multiple writers and teachers.