



# The View From Here

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## LIVING IN GOD'S STORY

The Bible is *not* a safe book. Even if you begin reading it for the sake of the children's version of Noah's ark, Joseph's coat, or Jesus' kindness to little children, it still can get to you. It is the narrative account of God's purpose to rescue sinful-but-dearly-loved humans through his grace made known in Jesus.

People who overhear that story somehow get pulled into the narrative and begin to follow Jesus through their own personal engagement with The Story.

Your story is my story is ultimately the story of every human life. And our personal and collective stories make sense only in relation to God's Story as we learn it through Jesus. The gospel is not a series of doctrinal affirmations that different denominations fight over. It's the unfolding story of God's good purposes for the creatures he has made in his own image and likeness.

In its simplest form, then, evangelism is inviting people into the story of Jesus. It's challenging people to see themselves and all the events and relationships of their lives in the light of Jesus as their Way, Truth, and Life. The task of evangelism is to share the gospel so as to invite people to find meaning, identity, and purpose for their lives in knowing and following him.

The world's culture offers the option of shutting out God, pursuing a self-willed agenda, and suffering the tragic consequences. The church is called out of the world to be an alternative culture whose identity is shaped by God's nature, whose activities reflect his redemptive love, and where authentic joy reigns.

Our neighbors won't get caught up in the story of Jesus until they see us genuinely engaged with it. The heart of evangelism is not bumper stickers, T-shirts, and tracts; it is *authentic imitation of Jesus*. Only when the church becomes a cultural alternative to the world's racism and

sexism, jealousy and rivalry, selfishness and materialism can we be light in a dark world.

It isn't just our church's reputation but *you* as a neighbor, worker, classmate, or friend to the person who does not know Christ. You are called to be a person who keeps promises, lives with integrity, cares about others, and demonstrates an appealing, joyous way of life. Then a neighbor just may want to know more about what you believe and how you live. She will be open to talking with you about Jesus, attending church events with you, or joining your Bible study group.

In the process of interacting with the people of God, people hear the music of the gospel and begin to move to its rhythm. They see how *The Story* engages their personal stories. They encounter the Holy Spirit and are changed.

The unsafe-but-inviting story told in Scripture still engages and enlists hearts. Our task is to model it. Paint the picture. Make the music. God sees to the result.

### IN GOD WE TRUST

(copied)

We take a look at the money in our pocket and it says "*In God we trust.*" Trust Him to

do what? Keep us free from another terrorist attack? Make us prosperous? Sustain our position as a world power? Just what exactly does it mean "In God we trust" and how are we to demonstrate our trust in God?

Here is a direct question: "*Can you trust God?*" It is a question that must be answered. However, there are two ways to ask that question.

**First** - Can you *trust* God? The focus is on Him. That is, is He dependable in times of need? Will He do what He said He would do? Is He someone that has the ability, will and resources to faithfully live up to His Word?

**Second** - Can *you* trust God? The focus is on you. Do you have a relationship with Him? Do you have such confidence in Him that you believe He is with you even if you do not see any evidence of His personal presence or power? Do you trust Him when He seems strangely silent? Do you trust Him when the deadline you set comes and goes?

**PROVERBS 22.17-19** says:

<sup>17</sup> Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, And apply your mind to my knowledge; <sup>18</sup> For it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, that they may be ready on your lips. <sup>19</sup> So that *your trust* may be in the LORD, I have taught you today, even you.

See You on Sunday...for Church & **Sunday School!**

*Jack*

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS  
Borrowed from Lee Keele, Crossroads Christian  
Church, Hutchison, KS

“<sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, do [what is] good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is gracious to the ungrateful and evil. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. **Luke 6.35-36**

It occurred to me that this is the good news of grace as Jesus preached it. Another preacher recently pointed out that Jesus rarely if ever used the word grace, but I can tell you this – he sure talked about it. Let me elaborate by saying it this simply—Jesus wants us to follow him. That means that we are asked to take his approach to life. All that he has asked us to do—he is willing to do or has already done it. Let’s put these verses to the test.

Jesus calls us to love our enemies. Why? Because he does. He loves his enemies, even when the enemy is us. We are loved even when we hate.

Jesus calls us to do good and to lend to others expecting nothing in return. Why? Because he does. He gives to us, he lends to us, he forgives us and do you know what he expects in return? Nothing. Could you imagine that Jesus could ask his church to be more forgiving than he is? Impossible. Surely when he tells us to do good and lend to others expecting nothing—he himself does this as well. Jesus gave his life and there is nothing we can give in return. Nothing.

Jesus calls us to be grateful to those who are ungrateful and even to those who are evil. I have seen many Christians handle the

problem of evil people. Very often, the best we can do is avoid them. Stay away. But Jesus calls us to do more—actually love and do good to them. Why? Because he does. Did you know that even when you were evil, even when you ARE evil, even when you don’t deserve it because you are ungrateful and unkind toward God and others that God is STILL kind and gracious toward you? It is in his nature to do so. He’s called us to live this way because this is the way he lives.

Let this thought soak in.

Have you ever been an enemy of the cross? Either by denying it’s power, or by trying to take up salvation through some other means (like works?) Have you ever been ungrateful? Unkind? Undeserving? Sure, so have I. But you know what—God’s kindness still flows in our direction. It is in his nature to love the unlovable, to forgive the unforgiveable, gracious to the ungracious, and kind to the unkind.

Application: Fall in love with God, friend. Know that his love for you extends beyond the boundaries of your evil and your yesterday. It reaches out past the worst that is in you and brings you in close to him so that there you can find the best that is within you. It is here, in the recognition of this grace that you find motivation to do well. You find strength to make strong choices. You find comfort to console. You find grace to forgive. You find reason to share purpose. You find enough love to love. You find that you have been given the divine ability to let go of all the pain, the bitterness, the anger, the resentment that has had you in the clutches of death itself. And being free from it. You live. Truly LIVE! Now that’s gospel, friends. That’s gospel.



# The Word of Truth

# POWER FROM ON HIGH

June 5	<b>POWER FROM ON HIGH</b>	<i>The Holy Spirit and the Bible</i>
June 12	<b>POWER FROM ON HIGH</b>	<i>The Holy Spirit’s Work in the Old Testament</i>
June 19	<b>POWER FROM ON HIGH</b>	<i>The Holy Spirit and Jesus</i>
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July 3	<b>POWER FROM ON HIGH</b>	<i>The Work of the Holy Spirit before Conversion</i>
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July 24	<b>POWER FROM ON HIGH</b>	<i>The Work of the Holy Spirit after conversion</i>
July 31	<b>POWER FROM ON HIGH</b>	<i>The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts</i>