

GETTING TO KNOW THE GOSPEL

Use this “gospel cheat sheet” to become increasingly familiar with Bible passages that relate to the good news of Jesus. Return to them often, meditate and memorize, so they get inside you and can be drawn on naturally in conversation.

Jesus is the most interesting man in the world. He has changed the course of human history, inspired and empowered people to live more loving lives, and claimed to be the final sacrifice to bring the end to all religion. Whether you are talking with a seeker, saint, or skeptic, be confident that the core message of Jesus is fascinating and worth talking about!

The Gospel in Thirty Words...

Jesus is GOD WITH US, come to
SHOW US God's love,
SAVE US from sin,

SET UP God's kingdom, and
SHUT DOWN religion, so we can
SHARE IN God's life.

GOD WITH US

- The Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament, written hundreds of years before Jesus) prophesied a time when God would bust through the boundaries of religion and dwell intimately with humankind.
 - » **Jeremiah 31:31-34**; ³¹ “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. ³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”
 - » **Ezekiel 36:25-27**; ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.
 - » **Joel 2:28-29**; ²⁸ “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.
- Jesus’s coming began the fulfillment of many prophecies, and started a “New Covenant” or new way of living in relationship with God and with others.
 - » **Luke 22:20**; ²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.
 - » **2 Corinthians 3:6**; ⁶ He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
 - » **John 1:1-18**; ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were

made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

» **John 5:37-40;** ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, ³⁸ nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. ³⁹ You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

» **Colossians 1:21-23;** ²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

• In his life, death, and teachings, Jesus—and only Jesus—gives us a clear and unmistakable demonstration that God is really with us and for us.

» **Matthew 1:23;** ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

» **Luke 23:34;** ³⁴ Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

» **John 13:1-5;** ¹³ It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

» **All four gospels**

• Because we know that God is with us, for us, and not against us, we can come home to him like the prodigal son (Luke 15) with confidence and bold joy.

» **Hebrews 4:16;** ¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

SHOW US GOD'S LOVE

- The essence of God, our Source and Sustainer, is love—pure interrelating love. This truth resonates with us on a deeply intuitive level because we have been made by (and for) this God who is love.
- » **1 John 4:7-21;** ⁷ *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. ¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.*
- Jesus (and only Jesus) gives us clear and definitive evidence of God's great love for us.

» **John 3:16;** ¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

» **Romans 5:6-10;** ⁶ *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

SAVE US FROM SIN

- Sin is any attitude or action that is anti-love. Sin separates relationships because of patterns of selfishness, self-centredness, and eventually self-absorption. Sin leads increasingly to a kind of living death.
- » **Isaiah 59:1-2;** *Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. ² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*
- » **Mark 7:20-23;** ²⁰ *He went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. ²¹ For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person."*
- » **Romans 6:23;** ²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

- When we envision the crucifixion, we see our sin killing Christ, acted out by the leaders of religion and politics. It is our sin that we see acted out in the rejection, mockery, wrath, and

violence against Jesus. It is our sin that drives in the nails and washes our hands of it all. And it is our sin that Jesus takes upon himself and drags down into the grave with him.

- » **The passion narratives; notice the pattern of early church gospel preaching in Acts 2:23-24, 36; 3:15, 19; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; etc.**
- Jesus assures us that we are now free from judgement, wrath, and condemnation.
- » **John 5:24;** ²⁴ *“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.*
- » **Romans 5:9;** ⁹ *“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!*
- » **Romans 8:1;** *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,*
- Jesus embodies God’s message of forgiveness and reconciliation, and announces God’s plan to renew and restore us and our world.
- » **John 3:3-8;** ³ *Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”* ⁴ *“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”* ⁵ *Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”*
- » **Romans 3:23-24;** ²³ *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*
- » **Romans 5:1-2;** *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.*
- » **2 Corinthians 5:17-21;** ¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!* ¹⁸ *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- » **Ephesians 2:14-22;** ¹⁴ *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. ¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*
- » **Colossians 1:21-23;** ²¹ *Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.*

- When we trust God to rebirth us into our true selves, we are made perfect in spirit and can live in union with God, even if we are still temporarily living in bodies that sin.
- » **Romans 7:17, 20;** ¹⁷ *As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.* ²⁰ *Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.*
- » **2 Corinthians 5:21;** ²¹ *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

SET UP GOD'S KINGDOM

- Jesus not only saves us *from* something (sin and self-destruction), he also saves us *to* something: living in union with God's will and God's way. This is called "the Kingdom of God".
- » **Matthew 6:10;** ¹⁰ *your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*
- » **Mark 1:15;** ¹⁵ *"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"*
- The Kingdom of God is an eternal life that we can begin to live right here and right now. Jesus shows us the way.
- » **Luke 17:20-21;** ²⁰ *Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, ²¹ nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst."*
- The way of the Kingdom is a way of peace, where we view other people who oppose us, not as the enemy, but as victims of the true, unseen enemy. This allows us to reach out to all people with the divine, non-violent, love of Jesus.
- » **Matthew 5:38-48;** ³⁸ *"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' ³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. ⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*
- » **Luke 6: 27-36;** ²⁷ *"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you. ³² "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*
- » **John 18:36;** ³⁶ *Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."*

- » **2 Corinthians 10:3-4;** ³ *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.*
- » **Ephesians 6:12;** ¹² *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*



SHUT DOWN RELIGION

- Jesus introduces us to the most irreligious concept of all: grace. Grace means that God gives to us as a gift everything that religion tries but fails to accomplish.
 - » **John 1:17;** ¹⁷ *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*
 - » **2 Timothy 1:9-10;** ⁹ *He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*
 - » **Hebrews 8:13;** ¹³ *By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.*
- Jesus never used the word “religion” to describe what God wants, but he did talk about “faith”, which simply means a trusting relationship. What God gives us as “grace,” we receive by simple “faith” (or believing/trusting).
 - » **John 3:16;** ¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*
 - » **John 6:28-29;** ²⁸ *Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” ²⁹ Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”*
 - » **John 17:3;** ³ *Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*
 - » **John 20:31;** ³¹ *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
 - » **Ephesians 2:8-10;** ⁸ *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*
- If we think of religion as any system of rules and rituals that we use to get right with God, then God’s gift of coming to us and making us right causes the rules and rituals of religion to become redundant.
 - » **2 Corinthians 3;** *Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? ² You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. ³ You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. ⁴ Such confidence we have through Christ before God. ⁵ Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶ He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. The Greater Glory of the New Covenant ⁷ Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? ⁹ If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry*

that brings righteousness! ¹⁰ For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. ¹¹ And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts! ¹² Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

» **Galatians 3:23-4:7;** ²³ Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. ²⁴ So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. ²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. **4** What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. ² The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. ³ So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. ⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. ⁶ Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

» **Hebrews 8:13;** ¹³ By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

• Now our "religion" is simply to live a loving life. This means all of the spiritual practices we participate in (church, prayer, Bible reading, etc) are "want to's" not "have to's."

» **James 1:26-27;** ²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

SHARE IN GOD'S LIFE

• God's hope is to include us in God's own triune love life, starting now and stretching into eternity.

» **John 14:15-20, 23,** ¹⁵ "If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²³ Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

» **John 15:15;** ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

» **John 17:26;** ²⁶ I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

- We can begin to live in love with God here and now, through partnership with the Holy Spirit.
 - » **Galatians 2:20;** ²⁰ *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*
 - » **2 Peter 1:3-4;** ³ *His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.* ⁴ *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

READ: (re)union & the (re)union study guide