


How to Share the Gospel Clearly

by
Charles C. Bing, Pastor
Burlison Bible Church
Burlison, Texas



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Once, when I was invited to preach at an evangelistic rally in Dallas, the organizing pastor introduced me to a dear woman before the meeting. He had talked with her previously, but remained unsure whether she was saved or not. He left me alone with her, so I asked some “diagnostic” questions to find out for myself. I concluded that she did not really understand the Gospel, so I explained it to her as clearly as I could, then led her to place her faith in Christ.

When we returned to the pastor to tell him the good news, she instead pointed her finger in his face and in an accusing voice rebuked him, “Why didn’t you explain it clearly to me? You never made it clear!” (No evidential fruit of the Spirit at this point!) It is hard to say who was embarrassed more--I or the pastor who had just graduated from seminary as a “Master of Theology!”

Academic credentials are no guarantee of clarity in communication. Sometimes it seems seminary degrees uniquely qualify a person to make a simple message confusing or complicated--anything but clear. One could even say that seminary grads become more obscure *by degrees*! Telling the Gospel clearly can be an exercise in art as much as in academics. Preachers and speakers of any kind are word artisans. A speaker shapes a message by the language and methods he uses.

In Col 4:4 Paul asked for prayer to make his Gospel telling “*manifest*, as I ought to speak.” The NASB and NIV translations prefer the word *clear* or *clearly*. F. F. Bruce translates it this way: “that I may publish it openly in the words which I ought to speak.”¹ Paul understood that it was easy to garble the Gospel. He wanted to word it clearly. The word he used, *phanerow*, has the idea of “to make visible” and is from *phainw* which means “to manifest” or “to light up.”² The job of the Gospel-teller is to shed light on the message, to make it clear, not to obscure it.

How important is it to tell the Gospel clearly? Well, we only need to think about what is at stake. Only in the Gospel is there the “power of God to salvation” (Rom 1:16). No wonder Paul had an “anathema” for those who misstate the message!

The main assumption behind this article is this: God can use us to reach more people with a clear message than with a cloudy one. A clear presentation of the Gospel is not only more powerful, it also gets people off to a well-grounded start in their Christian walk. They will begin with a firm assurance and appreciation of their new salvation. Below are

four essential elements that make for a clear Gospel witness.

I. A Clear Motive

A compromise in integrity will likely tilt the telling of the Gospel. For example, one who is looking for bragging rights about his evangelistic prowess, or one who sweats his monthly field report on the number of conversions, may be tempted to take a shortcut with the Gospel message.

Once I was presenting the Gospel as clearly as I could to about twenty Cambodian refugees. At the end of our time, I invited all who would like to trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior to raise their hands. Everyone's hand went up! Though it would have made a good story, I never assumed this was a mass conversion. There were too many unknowns: The language barrier made me wonder if they understood my words. (I was speaking through a translator.) The religious barrier made me doubt they really understood concepts like sin and faith. (Most of them were Buddhist.) The cultural barrier made me wonder if they were not just being polite. (Asians are extremely polite, especially to teachers.) The social barrier had me wondering if they only wanted to please me because they saw me as a way to get something more in life (money, a job, etc.). The headlines in my newsletter, "A Miraculous Movement of the Spirit on Refugees," would have to wait.

How did the apostle Paul handle the temptation to take short cuts in sharing the Gospel for personal gain, or so that he could impress others, or get quick results? In 2 Cor 4:1-6 Paul states his approach to telling the Gospel, first negatively and then positively.

A. Negatively Speaking

Note Paul's negative terms first in v 2. He renounces "the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the Word of God deceitfully." He refuses to adopt questionable or shady practices which would bring shame if exposed. He would not use a convenient device or trick to achieve an end. He would not distort, dilute, compromise, adulterate, or falsify God's message. Paul would never manipulate or pressure people into a profession of faith.

When I was an unchurched teenager, some friends and I went to an all-you-can-eat pizza bash at a local church. As we approached the church entrance, I asked an usher where we could find the pizza. He told us we would have to listen to the evangelist preach first. We looked at each other. Well, if that's what it took to get pizza, okay. We sat down and listened.

At the end of his message, the evangelist asked all those who were not sure they were going to heaven to raise their hands. I raised my hand, but was determined to do nothing else. But he kept on, and before long we were all standing in place. Then, after we reached the point of no return (and imminent public embarrassment if we sat back down), he got us all to walk down the long church aisle to the front. We had been trapped like tuna in a net--but like dolphins, we didn't belong! At least we knew we would have the last laugh--we would get their pizza, even if it was a bit cold!

We may have made that evangelist look successful, and we may have been statistics in his newsletter, but I, for one, was not saved. Deceptive or even questionable tactics have no place in sharing the Good News.

Improper motives may muddy the message and methods of telling the Gospel. Below are some unacceptable practices that can grow from wrong motives.

1. Deceitful practices

Deceptive manipulation, such as I just illustrated, is unethical. No one should be tricked into hearing or responding to the Gospel. A minister friend told me how before he was saved he was invited to a luncheon to hear a well-known businessman speak, only to find that the man preached the Gospel. He was furious and had to sit on his hands during the car trip back to work so that he wouldn't deck his friend who invited him!

2. Dubious practices

Some methods Christians have adopted are not clearly deceptive, but questionable. Invitations to walk an aisle are not necessarily manipulative--it all depends on how the invitation is stated. A "Friend Day" at church can be a good activity for the church and your friends if they know what they are in for when they get there. By the way, could the door-to-door "surveys" conducted by Christians be more accurately named?

3. False promises

We must also be careful of making false promises of a trouble-free life for those who would trust in Christ. When people get saved, their marriage may not also be saved, their daughter may still want to get her nose pierced, and the IRS *will* still want their money.

When I was in India recently, a pastor friend told me that with Hindus they do not use the promise of an improved family as a reason to become a Christian. The Hindu family is strong, and divorce is not a big problem. Besides, it is the *Christians* (who usually hold "Western" values) who have the weaker families in India. The pastor said that their appeal in telling the Gospel is the promise of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins. How novel!

4. Sensual appeal

The Children of God cult used to urge their followers to proselytize through "Flirty Fishing." Attractive young ladies would lure naïve young men to their religious meetings with the impression that punch and cookies was not the main dish afterward. This is an extreme example of a sensual method. But is it so very different from luring people to Christ through the hope of finding a Christian husband or wife, or the promise of financial prosperity or physical healing?

Jesus could get a crowd by handing out free fish sandwiches, but He later chased them away by telling them, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life" (John 6:27). Missionaries warn of "Rice Christians," those who profess conversion in hopes of obtaining more of the missionaries' supplies.

5. *Trivialized pursuits*

A free dinner for two awarded to the visitation team with the most conversions will likely compromise the message or the methods they use. One friend, who used to be with a para-church organization, told how the pressure to share the Gospel with others was so great he often only shared a brief watered-down word so that he could list the person on his statistics sheet. Once he witnessed to a potted plant and recorded “her” as “Fern”!

I am aware that Gospel blimps and placards with “John 3:16” at football games *may* have a place in God’s big world. I also remind myself of evangelist D. L. Moody’s words to someone who criticized his methods of evangelism. He told him, “I like the way I’m doing it better than the way you’re *not* doing it!” But I question the effectiveness of methods that handle the Good News flippantly. The Gospel deserves more than a game-show approach if others are to take us and it seriously.

B. Positively Speaking

Paul disdains all unworthy tactics. Instead, in 2 Cor 4:2 he states positively that he preaches “by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” The word “manifestation” is our word *phanerōw* again. Paul preached clearly, openly, and honestly even when discouraging circumstances tempted him to get fast results. The result of his ministry was that “every man’s conscience”-- whether saved or unsaved--commended him for his honesty, and more importantly, so did God.

I once overheard two seminary students discussing a Scripture passage. One said, “I don’t think that’s what the passage is saying.” The other replied, “Yeah, but it’ll preach!” Our standards must be higher than “It’ll preach.” We must only say what God says and in the way He would say it.

In a ministry of light, there is no room for darkness. Paul reminds us that a dark, demonic veil blinds unbelievers (vv 3-4). It is penetrated only by “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” Dark motives and methods cannot penetrate or disperse the darkness. That is why Paul says “we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord” (v 5). His preaching did not call attention to himself, like the “super apostles” who were subverting his reputation in Corinth (11:5). He lifted up Jesus Christ as the One who died for sins, rose from the dead, and now reigns as Lord.

It is significant that Paul uses the word *khryssh* for “preach.” In the ancient world, one who proclaimed in this sense was called a *khryx*, or “herald.” A herald was someone sent by his master to proclaim in public the master’s message. He dared not change the announcement because it was not his own. His responsibility was only to proclaim it accurately. That is how Paul understood his Gospel ministry. He was merely a servant proclaiming his Master’s Good News. The herald should be lost in his message. Only the Gospel of light dispels darkness and brings new life. That’s how Paul got saved (v 6), and that’s how we get saved.

The acid test of a true witness is what he does when no one responds. It is a test of

integrity. Skewed motives will skew integrity by a compromise in the message or the methods of telling the Good News.

At the end of my meeting with the Cambodian group, I left them with an assurance of my love and my desire to see them come to know the Lord Jesus as their Savior. Their last words to me came through the translator in his rough English: “They say, `Thank you for *advertising* Jesus Christ to us.” I doubt that any of those people even remember my name today, but I trust some of them know Jesus Christ. We advertise Him.

It is a great privilege to be a herald of the Gospel. But we must remember that the greatest thing about preaching the Gospel is the *Gospel*, not the preacher!

II. A Clear Content

What does a person have to believe in to be saved? I have heard everything from “Believe in God” and “the Ten Commandments” (or “the Sermon on the Mount”) to “Just believe that Jesus loves you.” What is the content of the Gospel and how can we articulate it clearly?

A. Defining the Content

Most of our readers should not need a review of the Gospel’s content. It is laid out no more clearly than by Paul in 1 Cor 15. Paul reminds the Corinthians about the Gospel that he preached, that they received, and by which they were saved (vv 1-2). The message was the one Paul received personally from God (v 3; cf. Gal 1:11-12).

In vv 4-5 we find two great propositions of the Gospel and their supporting evidence. We could diagram the verses like this:

Christ died for our sins		1) First proposition	
	according to the Scriptures		a) Scriptural proof
	and was buried		1b) Physical proof
He arose		2) Second proposition	
	according to the Scriptures		2a) Scriptural proof
	and was seen		2b) Physical proof

In summoning the evidence for his propositions, Paul is arguing his case like any good lawyer (the possible oxymoron noted!). A brief explanation of each of the statements follows:

Christ died for our sins. The concept of “Christ” may not have been entirely understood by the Corinthian readers, but the meaning of “anointed” and His work of dying for sins certainly points to a special divine messenger. That He died for our sins implies that we

are sinners in need of forgiveness. The word “for” (*hyper*) conveys the idea of “on account of,” i.e., to deal with our sins.

According to the Scriptures. The OT Scriptures pictured or predicted the suffering of God’s Messiah (e.g., Ex 12; Lev 16; Ps 22, 110; Isa 52-55, especially 53:4-6).

And was buried. This statement functions as Jesus’ death certificate. It reminds the reader of the many eye-witnesses to His death, the best evidence which could be summoned. Only *dead* men are buried. Christ’s death was witnessed by multitudes, including the soldier sent to break His legs. The grave and body were also attended by Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and the women.

He arose. The second proposition attests to Christ’s resurrection from the dead, which implies that God accepted the sacrifice. A dead man cannot save anyone. A Savior has to be alive. Only then can He offer and effect salvation.

According to the Scriptures. It is harder to find the resurrection of Christ in the OT. However it is there not only explicitly (Eg., Ps 16:8-11; 110:1), but also implicitly. When the suffering and death of the Messiah is discussed, this is often followed by a declaration of His reign (cf Isa 53). The implication is clearly that He rose from the dead.

And was seen. Paul lists those who were eye-witnesses. This included the apostles (men of repute), a multitude of five hundred, and himself (vv 5-8).

B. Communicating the Content

Having reviewed the biblical content of the Gospel, what errors do Christians commonly make in articulating its contents? The art here is discerning how much to say. We can say too little or too much.

1. Saying too little

People can be told that God loves them, but certainly that is not enough to save them. They can be convinced they are terrible sinners, but still not know how to deal with that sin (cf. Acts 2:36-37). A persuasive speaker can move people to some kind of response without them knowing exactly what they are responding to. Evangelists know this. Some abuse this. Much so-called “evangelism” is more hype than substance. No wonder there are so many false professors in the church! They are the fodder that feeds the Lordship Salvation teaching.

2. Saying too much

A witness is not the time to dump our “smarties” on a bewildered unbeliever. There are at least two ways Christians frequently do this.

A Bible survey. Too often we try to give too much biblical data. If we start in Genesis, there’s a good chance we will lose our audience by Leviticus, the Bermuda Triangle of the Bible. How much Bible did Jesus use with the woman at the well (John 4), or Paul with the Philippian jailer (Acts 16)? We can tell people only what they need to know from

the Bible to be saved, unless circumstances require more explanation.³

A crash course in Theology 101. I recently asked a missionary candidate with seminary training to tell me how he explains the Gospel to someone. I expected a brief outline of his main points. Instead, he took a deep breath and submerged into profound meditation for a good part of a minute. When he surfaced, he began a deep theological explanation of the sinfulness of man. I interrupted him, because I feel I have endured my share of theology lectures.

Lessons in theology work best with *Christians*. That is why Paul wrote the heavily theological Epistle to the Romans to Christians. But in 1 Cor 15:1-6 he reminds the readers of what he preached to them as *non-Christians*. Secular Sam does not need to know the definition of *justification* in order to be justified. He does not need to understand the *Abrahamic covenant* to become a son of Abraham. Neither does he need to comprehend the *ordo salutis* to be saved in that order. *Melchizedek* will be a fascinating study for Sam--*after* he is saved.

Again, we appeal to Jesus' example in the Gospels. Isn't it beautiful that God made the Gospel so simple that a child can understand it? Yet it is so simple that millions miss it. Still, keep it simple!

III. A Clear Condition

Just when I had talked myself into the benefit of becoming involved with my community's ministerial alliance, they decided to launch a community-wide evangelistic survey. A smorgasbord subcommittee of pastors designed the evangelistic tract that would be handed out door to door. To be thorough, I guess, the tract covered all the bases. It spoke of believing in Jesus as Savior (Amen!), but went on to tell the poor chap at the door (who was probably dying to get back to his television ASAP) that he must *confess his sins, call on the name of the Lord, open the door of his heart, receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, and let Him take control of the throne of his life*. It's not that all of this language is unbiblical (though most of it is), but it is so *confusing*. Since the alliance would not let our church use different literature, I had to drop out of my first foray into cooperative evangelism. The reverends were miffed. Maybe I will check in on them again in a year or so when they calm down.

We will save ink by affirming to our readers that the only condition of salvation is "faith alone in Christ alone." But this is where much Gospel telling takes a space-walk. Let's review some language commonly used to explain the condition of salvation.

Ask Jesus into your heart. Not that the heart is not universally understood as the very essence of our being and person. But the issue of trust in Jesus as the One who died in our place is hardly communicated. And wouldn't this be confusing to a child who thinks concretely instead of abstractly?

As a mother drove with her young daughter in the car, she was explaining what it meant to have Jesus in her heart. The little girl leaned over and put her ear to her mother's chest. "I'm listening to Jesus in your heart," said the daughter. "What did you hear?" asked Mom. The little girl replied, "Sounds like He's making coffee to me!"⁴

Give your heart (or life) to God. A Halloween Gospel tract designed for children to leave at homes when Trick or Treating ends, “Well, thanks again for the treat, but the best treat for me would be for you to give your heart to Jesus.”² How appropriate this could be for Halloween! A child might imagine this as a gruesome display for the local haunted house. Again, picture the scene conveyed to a naïve child. When asked to give his heart to God, one child broke into sobs saying, “If I give my heart to God, how am I going to live?”⁶ The issue in salvation is not what we give to Him anyway, *but what He gives to us*. Eternal life is Christ’s life in us (1 John 5:11).

Invite Christ into your life. This is certainly a courteous approach, but we must remember that it is the Lord who does the inviting. Another form of this is the admonition to “open the door of your heart,” based on Rev 3:20. Though I used to use this verse a lot, I now see that it was written to the Laodicean church as a whole and was more of an invitation for fellowship than salvation. Again, after you get a child to stop wondering where the knob on the door of his heart is, you have really told him nothing about what it means to believe in Christ. Adults are not helped either.

Receive Christ as your Savior. This one I hesitate to criticize, and even find myself using it sometimes, though I try to avoid it. There *is* some biblical support for the idea of receiving Christ--John 1:11-12 and Col 2:6. Both uses are in the past tense, pointing to the result of faith, however. Receiving Christ is what happens when we believe and He comes to live in us.² *Accept Christ* is similar, but not used for faith in Christ in the NT.

Make Christ Lord and Savior. Spare the effort. No person can do this. The Bible says *God the Father* “has made this Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Of course Jesus is Lord! But He is Lord whether we accept Him as such or not.

Make Christ Lord of your life. This is Lordship Salvation when used as a condition for salvation. Lordship decisions are decisions for Christian obedience made by believers in the light of transforming grace (Titus 2:11-12), not something done *to merit* that grace (Titus 3:4-7). Sometimes we hear “If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.” Would somebody please tell me what this saying means?

Put Jesus on the throne of your life. In other words, give Him control of all areas of your life. Has anyone accomplished this? It is a commendable admonition for a believer, but again teaches Lordship Salvation if it is made a condition for salvation. It is better to deal with this issue after a person understands the issue of faith in Christ for salvation. I know, however, that some people believe in Christ as Savior and surrender to Him as Lord simultaneously. They inherently understand that if Christ saves us, He also deserves to rule us and both decisions appear as one. Still, the issues are distinct.

Confess your sins. To a priest? How many sins? What about ones that are overlooked, forgotten, unintentional, or by omission? This is confusing. Of course, we must all acknowledge that we are sinners before God, and we confess this to Him when we agree with Him that we are.⁸ We are saved *from something*, and that is our sin. But the above statement implies our problem is specific individual acts rather than our sinful position or nature. God wants to cure the cause, not the symptoms.

Repent of your sins. Sometimes less sensitively stated as “Turn or burn!” If by this it is meant that we must turn from every individual sin in our lives, then salvation and assurance would be impossible. Repentance in the NT speaks of an inner change of attitude and heart, not an outer change in conduct. Changed conduct is the expected result of true repentance, but we should not confuse the root with the fruit. As we come to faith we may change our minds about a number of things, for example, our sinful status before God, our need for salvation, or our opinion of who Christ is.

Pray this prayer. I have a pamphlet entitled “God’s Anointed Soul-Winning Plan” in which the author is explaining how to present the Gospel. The wording he suggests ends like this:

What I’m going to do toward closing our talk is to say a prayer. And as I say this prayer you can repeat it softly and He’ll come into your heart--but you have to REALLY MEAN it or the prayer won’t work.

Before we pray the prayer I want to say this, this prayer we are about to pray is a *special* prayer. Do you need to pray this prayer EVERY DAY to go to heaven, or just ONCE to go to heaven? (emphasis his).²

I am not making this up. Believe me, you don’t want to see the prayer.

We should not give someone the impression that they can be saved by a ritual such as prayer. It is better to tell them that they must believe in Christ, and they can tell Him *through* prayer that they want the gift of eternal life or that they are thankful for what He has done.

Not all of the above conditions are totally void of all truth. The point is that they are often misleading or confusing. Why not be as biblical as possible in our communication of the condition for salvation? In the Gospel of John the verb *believe* is used ninety-eight times as the condition for salvation. We should take the hint, especially when the Holy Spirit had John tip us off that he wrote his book in order to bring people to faith in Christ (John 20:31). We don’t find any of the above language there.¹⁰

IV. A Clear Invitation

A minister acquaintance told me an *almost* humorous story of his conversion. When he was a totally pagan, long-haired bartender and bouncer, he attended a revival and went forward at the evangelist’s invitation. When he got to the front, the host pastor met him and asked, “Do you come to make a profession of faith in Christ?” Bill looked confused. The pastor asked several times. Bill finally said, “Look, I don’t know what you’re talking about. I just want Jesus.” He told me if it had not been for the evangelist’s clarity in the sermon, he would not have found Christ up front with the pastor. As one of my seminary professors, Howard Hendricks, was fond of saying, “A mist in the pulpit is a fog in the pew.”

A clear telling of the Gospel can easily become unclear when the invitation is given. Whether it is an invitation in a one-on-one encounter or a public invitation by a preacher,

there are certain things that will keep it clear. Let's look at some of the common invitations and comment on each.

Come forward. The invitation to come down the church aisle is used by many preachers, though criticized by others--sometimes rightly so.¹¹ It *has* only been around since the 1800's. Some people will quickly respond to such a public expression, and others would rather go through an IRS audit before they would stand up in front of a crowd. In spite of 18 verses of "Just As I Am," *they* are singing to themselves, "I Shall Not Be Moved"!

Walking the aisle is not harmful if the person clearly understands the issue. We probably all know someone who came to faith in this way. But people should never be led to believe that they *must* walk an aisle in order to be saved--even if the preacher's ego *is* at stake. They should be encouraged to walk an aisle if they want to talk to someone about their salvation or if they want to make a public statement that they have trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior during the meeting.

Bow your heads and close your eyes. (Not, *Close your heads and bow your eyes*, as one hapless preacher stated it!). Why must Christians always get saved with their eyes closed? In a séance opening the eyes might break the spell, but in a Gospel confrontation faith can appear with eyes wide open. Funny, but Jesus was always *opening* peoples' eyes! On the serious side, closed eyes and bowed heads can create a safe, confidential, and prayerful environment for those who may want to respond publicly.

Raise your hand. Again, we must avoid implying that a physical act is necessary. However, raising a hand is less threatening to a person than walking an aisle. It may give the preacher more opportunity to identify those who are interested in salvation. In fact, I ask people to raise their hands in my invitation, because I want to follow-up with them. I will often tell them something like this:

You don't have to bow your head or raise your hand to be saved. You can believe in Jesus Christ with your eyes wide open while you are looking at me. I would just like to know that you have placed your faith in Christ as your Savior or that you want to know more about that. The only way I can know who you are, so I can speak with you later in private, is if you raise your hand. I really would like to talk to you about it.

Sign a card. This is also non-threatening to many people, even though a few may have fearful visions of a three-person Evangelism Explosion team ambling up their sidewalk later in the week. It is often wise to ask this only if *all* the people present at the meeting fill out cards. This makes people feel less conspicuous. A card could include these categories to check:

- I have trusted in Jesus Christ as my Savior today.
- I want more information about knowing Jesus Christ as Savior.
- I want to know for certain that I have eternal life.
- I want to speak to someone about my salvation.

Pray a prayer. An invitation involving prayer *can* be handled correctly. The Gospel teller must be careful to make the issue faith. When inviting people to Christ, I explain how it is

that Christ saves us through faith, make sure they understand the issues, then ask, “Do you believe this?” If they say “Yes,” I say, “Then why don’t you thank Him right now in prayer for dying for you and for giving you eternal life?”

It may not be possible to validate a public invitation from the Scriptures. But then we could not validate Gospel tracts and evangelism training classes either. Sharing the Good News implies an invitation to believe, and giving a clear invitation may help many to actually do it. The main point in relation to the invitation is that in no way do we want a person to get faith mixed up with works. If we have told someone that salvation is a free gift, then we must be consistent and not demand any action as a condition. In fact, when someone decides to respond to any kind of invitation, it seems logical that he or she is already trusting in Christ and just desires to express it somehow. An invitation gives people an opportunity to tell others about their faith, something they should be doing the rest of their lives. Such an expression can help affirm them in their faith.

Conclusion

Clear communication is an art. When it comes to telling the Gospel it is an art worth refining. We must work to tell the Gospel as clearly as possible. Not always will we succeed. But isn’t it a wonderful fact of life that God can still use us in spite of the misplaced approaches and methods that we use? We know, however, that He can accomplish more through us according to how clear and biblical our message and our methods are. And that means that we are clear in our motives, in our Gospel content, in our statement of the condition for salvation, and in our invitation to believe. Given all that is at stake, we want to share the Good News as clearly as possible in a way that is pleasing to God, not just convenient to men.

We give the last word to the Bible:

But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. First Thessalonians 2:4.

1 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians and Colossians*, in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), 298.

2 *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Abridged in one volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), 1244-45.

3 Having said all that, we state an important caveat: It does no good to talk about concepts like sin unless our audience has an idea of what it means. We must be careful not to assume too much biblical background for our audience. Paul started his witness with creation in Athens (Acts 17). When in a remote African fishing village, I also found it necessary to begin my witness with the account of creation and the fall of man. Our society is growing increasingly secular and will need more and more explanation, but

usually we give too much anyway.

4 James Dobson told this story on his March 1, 1994 broadcast.

5 “Thanks for the Treat,” Faith, Prayer, & Tract League (Grand Rapids).

6 Larry Moyer, “Guiding Children to Trust Christ,” Moody Monthly, December 1987, 42.

7 Note how the immediate context of each passage refers to faith as the condition of salvation.

8 The word translated “confess” is *homologew* which means “to speak the same thing,” thus “to agree with (some person with reference to something)”. See Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1944-55), 1:177-78.

9 Larry Beckmann, “God’s Anointed Soul-Winning Plan,” Baldwin Park, CA: n.p. 1982.

10 Except, as noted above, the mention of receiving Christ in 1:11-12.

11 See my review of Jim Ehrhard’s article in the periodical review section of this issue.

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