
MEMBERSHIP CLASS

PCCO/Oakland International Fellowship

Audience:

- Baptized Christians who are exploring the possibility of becoming members of OIF
- Christians who desire to be baptized and become members of OIF
- Seekers who want to know more about the basics of the Christian life

Purpose:

To help member candidates understand and embrace the vision and core values of being a member of God's family in the context of His community- the Church, in particular- OIF.

Lesson Content:

- 1) What is the gospel?
 - What it means to be saved
 - What it means to be a Christian
 - How the gospel transforms a person
- 2) What is the Church and what is your part in the local church?
 - The importance of the local church
 - How the gospel transforms the community
 - What a good local church should have
- 3) What is OIF?
 - Our mission and vision
 - Our core values
 - Our structure
 - Your role in the OIF community
- 4) What is Baptism?*- The necessity of baptism
- The meaning of baptism
- The qualifications of baptism
- The methods of baptism
- The preparation of baptism

* Lesson 4 on baptism will be taught at a separate time for those who need it.

LESSON 1 - WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

A. PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

A member of the local church needs to first be a Christian. A true Christian is someone who have placed his/her faith and his/her life in who Jesus is and what He has done for us. Are you a Christian? What is the gospel that saved you? What does the gospel say about how you are saved? And what does it say about your life after you become a Christian?

B. KEY PASSAGE: EPHESIANS 2:1-10

¹ And **you were dead in the trespasses and sins** ² in which you once walked, **following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once **lived in the passions of our flesh**, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature **children of wrath**, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ **But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,** ⁵ **even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—** ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ **For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,** ⁹ **not a result of works, so that no one may boast.** ¹⁰ **For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

What stands out to you in this passage?

What does this passage say about God attitude towards us?

What doe this passage say about our condition before God saved us?

What does this passage say about the nature of God's salvation?

What does this passage say about our position and purpose after God saved us?

Definition of Sin:

- 1) Any action, thought, or attitude that falls short of God's righteous standard.
- 2) A self-centered attitude that wants to be in charge and rebels against God's authority over us.

C. DEFINITION OF THE GOSPEL

1. The gospel is news rather than instruction.

The Greek term “gospel” (*ev-angelion*) distinguished the Christian message from that of other religions. An ‘*ev-angel*’ was news of a great historical event that changed the listeners’ condition and required response (such as a victory in war or the ascension of a new king.) So the gospel is news of what God has done to accomplish salvation for us through Jesus Christ in history. It is not advice about what we must do to reach God. We do not achieve this salvation. We only receive it.

2. The gospel is grace rather than merit.

The gospel is: “I am accepted through Christ, therefore I do good.” ‘Religion’ is: “I do good, therefore I am accepted.” So the gospel differs from both religion and irreligion. You can seek to be your own ‘god’ by blatantly breaking the law of God and do as you please as a ‘hedonist’ (such as the younger prodigal son in Jesus’s story in Luke 15). You can also do so by *trying to keep* the law in order to earn your salvation as a ‘legalist’ (such as the older prodigal son in the same story).

3. The gospel is the door and the pathway

Disbelief in the gospel of grace keeps the unconverted from God. But not fully believing in the gospel is also a main cause of spiritual deadness, fear, and pride in Christians, when our hearts continue to act on the basis of “I do good, therefore I am accepted.” We do not ‘get saved’ by believing the gospel and then ‘grow’ by trying hard to live according to Biblical principles in our own effort. Believing the gospel is not only the way to meet God, but also the way to grow in Him. Many Christians live with a truncated view of the gospel. We see the gospel as the “door,” the way in, the entrance point into God’s kingdom. But the gospel is so much more! It is not just the door, but the path we are to walk every day of the Christian life. It is not just the means of our salvation, but the means of our transformation. It is not simply deliverance from sin’s penalty, but release from sin’s power. The gospel is what makes us right with God (justification), and it is also what frees us to delight and grow in God (sanctification).

4. The gospel is a transferring of our allegiance to a new Leader/King in our lives

Mark 1:14-15

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, **proclaiming the gospel of God,** ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and **the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.**”

Christ came to proclaim and offer the gospel (good news) of the Kingdom. God is breaking into human history and lives to exert His kingly leadership/authority in a special way through the words and works of Jesus Christ. To receive salvation means to admit that we have been living a self-directed, misguided life of sin and rebellion, to turn away from this lifestyle (repent) and receive (believe) the gracious, forgiving, loving leadership of Jesus. **This restored relationship is between a loving Shepherd and His sheep who trusts and follows Him.**

5. The gospel is the restoration of a personal relationship, not a religious system

John 17:3

³ And **this is eternal life**, that they **know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ** whom you have sent.

John 1:12-13

¹² But to all who did **receive** him, who **believed** in his name, he gave **the right to become children of God who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**

Romans 8:15 (also Galatians 4:6)

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but **you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"**

To become a Christian is to believe in the gospel for yourself. No one becomes a Christian by being physically born into a Christian family, but rather we become Christians by being spiritually born into God's family through our personal act of faith related to point #4 above. The 'eternal life' that God offers us does not start in 'heaven someday' but right here and right now, walking with Him daily in a relationship by faith.

The life lived in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a life marked by transforming joy, peace, hope and love even in the midst of difficulties and trials. Growing in the gospel means seeing more of God's holiness and more of my sin. And because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross, we need not fear seeing God as he really is or admitting how broken we really are. Our hope is not in our own goodness, nor in the vain expectation that God will compromise his standards and "grade on a curve." Rather, we rest in Jesus as our perfect Redeemer and— the one who is "our righteousness, holiness, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Which one of these great truths about the gospel impacts your heart the most? Why? Have you truly received the gospel of Jesus? Are you living according to it?