

Knowing our own message – a common neglect



The word ‘gospel’ simply means ‘good news’. Do you know for a fact that every member of your church could communicate the Christian message simply and clearly if asked? The members of many congregations could not. While it is challenging to say, it is hard to think of something more fundamental to outreach than this.

The good news that we carry as God’s Church is – in a word – about Jesus! Because God loves us he became the solution to our problem. And the core of our problem? Separation from him due to our wrongdoing – leading to a multiplicity of moral, relational and other problems.

Communicating this core message can be achieved in 30 to 90 seconds. It is therefore possible to see almost every member of a congregation capable of explaining their belief in a conversation.

To illustrate (a 45 second example):

Think of the words (1) Creation, (2) Fall, (3) Jesus, (4) Restoration, and then explain each in a single sentence. For example...

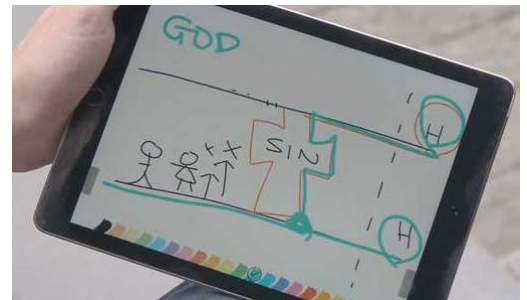
- [Creation] Christians believe God created the world and is perfect, and he gave us free will so we’d have the ability to love.
- [Fall] ...but we used that freewill to do things that were selfish, and this wrecked our relationship with God, each other and our planet – making the mess we see.
- [Jesus] ...However, because God really does love us, he decided to become the solution – and that’s what Christmas and Jesus’ death and resurrection, remembered at Easter, are about. God took a punishment we deserved to make possible...
- [Restoration] ...our restoration to relationship with him, each other and also our planet – and with an eternal perspective in view.

- [Evidence] What personally convinced me of this message was...

Certainly more could be said – but that is the ‘nuts and bolts’ of it. Discussing evidences, and asking questions, might then follow.

I recall a pastor getting the revelation that he hadn’t fulfilled his most basic role if his members couldn’t simply explain what they believed to their friends and family. He surveyed his members and this confirmed that most could not.

So he decided to equip them utilising a drawing which – if explained in words – covers the basic message. (For a similar drawing see *Because We Care* —



Series 1: Video #4 at AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members). Teaching this one Sunday he had everyone practice in pairs, and then invited an elderly person and an 8 year old onto the stage to demonstrate. Over the following few months he periodically invited someone on stage to demonstrate again – and succeeded in his goal!

To make the point, this became a turning-point in the outreaching efforts of that congregation. This most-basic equipping is maybe like a ‘starting line’.

Knowing how to explain our core beliefs simply is a simple thing. What if our churches decided to follow the above pastor’s example?