

# SALTY

## THE ART OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM

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A FIELD GUIDE FOR EVERYDAY GOSPEL  
CONVERSATIONS, FEATURING THE THREE  
CIRCLES GOSPEL PRESENTATION



GARY STIDHAM

# INTRODUCTION

For over twenty years, I served in college ministry at a large public university in Texas. Early on, our ministry got good at filling rooms with Christian students. But we weren't reaching the 95% of students who didn't already have a relationship with Jesus. As God broke our hearts for the lost, we began praying for revival, learning from missionaries, and taking action to build an evangelistic culture within our group. In the Fall of 2013, God started saving students – at least one every single week for the next decade. It was a humbling and powerful movement!

Often, I'll hear people assert that this generation is turning away from faith and isn't interested in Christianity. But that's not true! The openness of non-Christian young adults to discuss the gospel message continues to humble and amaze me.

There are more people ready to hear the good news about Jesus than there are Christians ready to share it. The problem isn't that the world isn't open enough; it's that the church isn't bold enough. In Luke 10:2, Jesus echoes this truth: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest field." I pray that this little book inspires a few people to join the harvest and helps you be more confident and competent in sharing the best news ever!



# SALTY: THE ART OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM

“How can I get better at sharing my faith?” As our campus ministry began to prioritize evangelism, a group started going onto campus in pairs on Friday afternoons to strike up conversations with strangers and try to share the Good News. We reasoned that if we could be bold on a mission trip, then why couldn’t we be bold right here at home? This process of two-by-two or “initiative” evangelism was unfamiliar and, honestly, uncomfortable at first. And initially, we were pretty bad at it! It only took a couple of weeks to realize that we needed some training and tools. So, each week, we’d try a new approach or resource, then debrief afterward.

Fast forward a couple of years, and we discovered what components of training a young Christian needed to become skilled and confident in evangelism. It requires knowing at least these five things:

- **Why to share:** understanding the Biblical call to evangelism. Every time we gather Christian students, we mention the incredible opportunity and calling to be Ambassadors of Christ.

- **What to share:** a clear gospel presentation: Begin with teaching one method repeatedly so people memorize it.
- **When to share:** multiple strategies. For us, these include initiative evangelism with strangers, relational evangelism with people we already know, weekly outreach tables in public areas, small group Bible studies, and affinity-group-based outreaches all over campus. For a local church, these might include relational evangelism, making appointments with people who visit the church or who fill out an interest form, door-to-door outreach in the neighborhood, and hosting or being present at community events to connect with people.
- **What to do afterward:** a follow-up plan. If a conversation goes well, invite them to meet again or come to a Bible study. If they receive Christ, invite them to start a discipleship workbook with you.
- **How to share:** the structure of a gospel presentation. How to start a conversation, ask great questions, transition to a gospel presentation, and invite them to respond.



## THE STRUCTURE OF A GOSPEL CONVERSATION

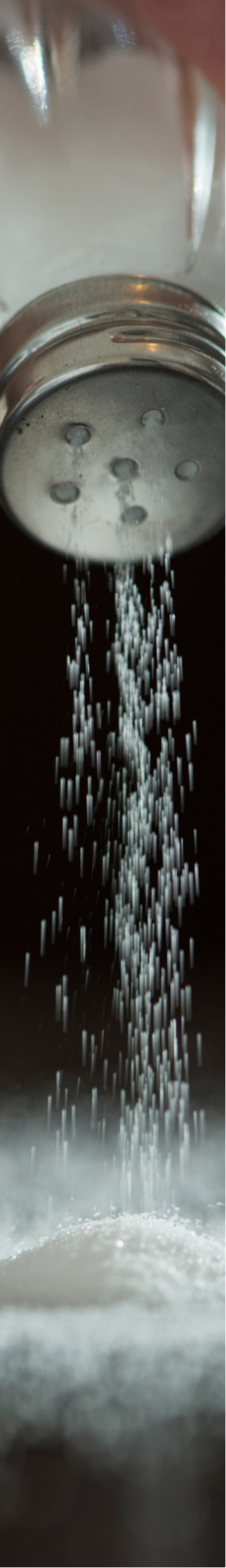
During those early years, we previewed lots of books and resources on evangelism. Many included a clear gospel presentation and strategies for evangelism. Most had inspiring stories. However, very few explained how to approach a conversation for someone who had never shared before. Yet for the young, fearful Christian students on our team, this was the precise point where they struggled. They begged to know, “How do I even get started?”

A stroke of genius occurred when I heard Dr. Rice Brookes mention the “SALT Method of Evangelism.” This was a simple acronym to inspire Christians to share: Start a conversation, Ask questions, Listen, Tell the good news. I remember thinking, “If we could just explain each of those four steps, students would know what to do!” It breaks down an evangelism conversation into bite-sized pieces. Over time, we expanded the acronym into a training tool, adding a “Y” at the end to indicate “Yes or no: invite them to respond.” And the SALT Y training was born.

## BEFORE WE TRY TO SHARE THE GOSPEL.

SALTY provides a framework for spiritual conversations with people you know and people you don't know. It describes how to have a healthy, thoughtful spiritual conversation. Your first impression might be that SALTY feels a little like a script. It does, and that's the point! If a Christian is unsure about what to say in an evangelistic conversation, showing them exactly what to say will supercharge their confidence. Then, we encourage people to adapt SALTY to fit their personality and put it in their own words. But before jumping in, I need to share a couple of preliminary points.

First, even though the fields are ripe for harvest (John 4:35), not every person is ready to hear. Imagine that you're on a busy college campus just as a class has just dismissed, and you can look out and see hundreds of people passing you on the sidewalks. Well, my faith in the Scripture and the work of God's Spirit tells me that some of them are open to the gospel. The Holy Spirit has already started to open their eyes to spiritual reality, convict them of sin, and woo them towards the Father. But there are other people who, at this moment, are closed and hardened to the message of Jesus. Which of those two people do we want to share with? The first one, obviously! Evangelism is never trying to force a message on someone who doesn't want to hear it. It's a treasure hunt for people who are open to the gospel!



Second, we must have a “code of ethics” for our spiritual conversations. These conversations should be *respectful, upfront, and permission-based*. Let’s look at each one.

- **Respectful.** Unfortunately, a few overzealous evangelists have given Christianity a bad name. They share in a pushy or judgmental way. Sometimes they can be downright obnoxious or won’t take no for an answer. We’ve all seen street preachers and known church members who did this. But Jesus wasn’t like that, and we mustn’t be either. Always approach people with kindness, respect, and dignity. Have a kind smile and a gentle demeanor. If they’re not interested in talking further, politely take no as their answer and a providential sign to move on.
- **Up front.** Beware of “sneaky evangelism.” What does this mean? Sneaky evangelism involves starting a conversation or inviting a person to an event under false pretenses. We never want to bait and switch someone. For college students, this means don’t approach a person in the cafeteria, ask if you can sit with them because you “like meeting new people,” and then engage in a high-pressure conversation. For churches, this means we never host an event and call it a party, but then include a gospel presentation that people are forced to sit through. If there’s going to be a message, just be clear.

- **Permission-based.** A lightbulb came on when we discovered this principle. This is maybe the most liberating concept related to faith sharing that I'm aware of. Here's how it goes. We know that, right now, some people are open to a spiritual conversation with us, and some people aren't. We want to talk to people who are open and not push a conversation on people who are closed. What's the best way to tell the difference? Ask them! Just be direct. It's not complicated; just ask permission. I might say something like this: "Hey, I'd really like to ask you about your spiritual beliefs and religious background. But I know that it's a personal topic for some people. Is that something you like to talk about or not really?" At this point, we're investigating their openness. If they say they aren't interested, take them at their word. If they're hesitant, don't pressure them, but explain further. "My faith is important to me, and I really like knowing what other people think about God." If they're open, then jump in! Asking permission is the key to talking with the right people.

# YOU GET TO THE GOSPEL BY BEING S.A.L.T.Y.

SALTY is a simple acronym that outlines how to have a respectful, productive gospel conversation in many different contexts.

The letters stand for...

- **S – Start Conversations**
- **A – Ask Questions**
- **L – Listen to Answers**
- **T – Tell them the Good News about Jesus**
- **Y – Yes or No; Invite them to respond**

Let's take them one at a time.

## S – START CONVERSATIONS

There are LOTS of ways to start a spiritual conversation! Want to have more conversations about the gospel? Bringing it up in conversations is the key. There's a connection between how many times we initiate a conversation and how many times we get to have a conversation. It's obvious, right? So how do we start conversations?

- **Casual Conversation #1:** Here's a statement you could make to a new or even a long-time friend: "Hey, I've never asked you before. Are you a religious person? Is that something you're open to and like to talk about?" Just be straightforward and ask.



- **Casual Conversation #2:** Another powerful principle involves becoming more unfiltered around our non-Christian friends. If you're like me, you often discuss your faith with Christian friends: church happenings, what you're learning from the Bible, what Christian book you're reading, or a worship song that is meaningful to you. However, with your non-Christian friends, we filter and don't mention any of that stuff. Sprinkling comments about our spiritual life into everyday conversation gives curious people an opportunity to react and respond. You may be afraid that making those kinds of remarks will be awkward. But it's even more awkward to know someone for months or years, then finally build up the courage to say, "My faith in Jesus is the most important thing about my life." And they're thinking, "We've known each other a long time and you never mentioned it!" So let's remove the filter and see what doors God opens.



- **Initiative Evangelism #1:** When we're on campus meeting new students, here's a straightforward, upfront way to introduce what you're doing: "Hi, my name is Gary, and this is my friend John. We're part of a Bible study on campus, and enjoy asking our people on campus to share their spiritual beliefs with us. Would you have a couple of minutes to share your perspective?"

Notice a few things in this invitation. First, it's quick and to the point. Second, we identify ourselves as Christians by mentioning that we're part of a Bible study. You don't have to give a longer explanation about which church or ministry you are part of unless they ask. Third, we provide them with a timeframe. We're not asking for an hour-long conversation—just a couple of minutes. Fourth, we're making a very specific request: that they share their beliefs with us. Many people are inclined to say yes because they enjoy talking about themselves. In fact, most people's favorite topic of conversation is themselves! Notice that we haven't yet asked permission to share our beliefs with them. We must honor the fact that we've only asked about their beliefs until we ask permission again to share ours. That will come later.

- **Initiative Evangelism #2:** Here's another straightforward approach: "Hi, I'm Gary, and this is John. We're part of a local church, and we're out inviting people to our Bible study. Have you ever thought about joining a Bible study?"

You can use this approach when you're out in the community, such as a park or the mall, with a card or flier that provides information about your church or ministry. Having that printed material gives you a little extra credibility. Notice the carefully worded question, "Have you ever thought of joining a Bible study?" On the one hand, you're being respectful by asking if they're even interested in what you're offering. But on a deeper level, the question helps diagnose a bit of their spiritual condition. A Christian might say, "Yeah, I already go to three Bible studies." Someone else might say, "I'm busy right now; sorry, I'm not interested." And some people will say, "You know, I went to a church youth group a few times but haven't been back in a long time. I've thought about it, though." Immediately, they're telling you things about their spiritual story. You can follow up with the sincere question: "What's your spiritual background? Do you mind if I ask you about that?"

# GOSPEL APPOINTMENTS

A gospel appointment occurs when we set up a specific time to meet with a person to talk about spiritual things. It's not as strange as it sounds. Gospel appointments are totally normal and can feel natural; they're just unfamiliar to us. For instance, say your church collects visitor information at Sunday services or Bible study. You make a call and say, "Hey, thanks for filling out a card this week. If you've got 20 minutes sometime soon, I'd love to meet up, hear more about your story, and tell you what our church is all about." And guess what the church is all about? Jesus! A college or youth ministry can do the same thing with contact cards from events, freshman orientation, or campus outreach tables.

You can also set up a gospel appointment with someone you meet personally at church or Bible study. These are the best! Say you meet a new person at your Bible study. Just invite them to an appointment by saying something like, "Hey, would you be interested in getting together sometime to hear more about our group? I'd love to hear your story and share a couple of helpful things I'm learning about having a relationship with God. Maybe we could get together sometime? Can I get your number? I'll text you to set it up!" The benefits include being simple to set up, very personal, and minimizing distractions. They're also purposeful because the person is coming already expecting to talk about faith. In our college ministry, lots of people met Christ during gospel appointments. It's an excellent tool!

## A - ASK QUESTIONS

Good evangelism begins with asking questions rather than sharing facts. Initially, it's more listening than speaking. Imagine being ushered into your doctor's office, and the nurse invites you to wait for the doctor. Eventually, she comes into the room, hands you a prescription, and walks out. She never took the time to ask you, "What's wrong? Where does it hurt?" She didn't run any tests or check your vitals. You wouldn't trust that prescription, and you wouldn't go to that doctor again! It's the same disconnect in evangelism when we offer the prescription (even if we're correct) without first helping them diagnose their illness. We know that the problem is sin and the solution is Jesus. But people have to realize this for themselves before they're truly ready to trust Christ.

A good evangelism encounter involves investigating the spiritual condition of the other person. It's a sacred privilege to ask people about their spiritual background! You're like a "doctor of the soul," helping them understand their illness. Many young adults don't talk about spiritual things with their parents or friends. Sometimes, you may be the first person ever to ask them about their soul. What a humbling opportunity! This means being patient and resisting the urge to share your own story or make your points. We especially must resist the urge to correct their theology. At this point, we've only asked them permission to investigate their spiritual beliefs.

Here's another excellent reason to ask a lot of good questions: People are fascinating! You never know what kind of answers you'll get. People believe interesting and sometimes kind of crazy stuff. I can't count the number of conversations I've had about UFOs, near-death experiences, psychedelic drugs, and weird superstitions. They'll frequently share contradictions without thinking twice. Often, they haven't thought deeply about these things, so they're working it out in their mind as they're speaking. So go slow. Be curious. Ask good questions.

## TOP 6 QUESTIONS FOR GOSPEL CONVERSATIONS

There are lots of great questions that you can ask in evangelism. But the best questions are open-ended and honest. You shouldn't know the answer before you ask the question. Otherwise, it's a "gotcha" question aimed at catching them in a rhetorical trap. These kinds of questions aren't asked in good faith. We want to relate to people as fellow human beings, not as a project aimed at scoring a conversion.

In our campus ministry, we distilled questions down into a “Top 6.” These questions go from less personal to more personal and from more general to more specific. Someone can easily memorize the six questions. Sometimes, we even print them on a little card and use them as a “spiritual life survey” on campus. Here they are:

**1. “What is your spiritual background?  
What did that look like growing up?  
What does it look like now?”**

Anybody can answer this question! Whether they’re a Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Atheist, or nothing at all, anybody can answer. Asking about both their past and present helps you gain an even deeper understanding.

**2. “What do you think is the meaning of life?”  
Or, “What is most important in life?”**

This is also a question that anybody can answer, regardless of their religious beliefs. It often leads to lively discussions!

**3. “Do you believe in God, and how do you think we should relate to God?”**

The next question transitions to their personal beliefs. Some Christians become anxious when someone says, “I’m an atheist; I don’t believe in God.” But you can still explore their beliefs. Ask, “If God did exist, what would you imagine he would be like?” And, “If God did exist, how would you imagine people could know him?”

#### **4. “What do you think happens when we die? What do you think is on the other side?”**

Life after death fascinates people. Have fun with this question. Even non-Christians are captivated by near-death experiences and ghost stories. Many people show interest in mystical and occult practices, like trying to contact the dead. Some people carry a deep fear about what happens when they die. Even though few people have a truly Biblical worldview, many still believe in heaven and hell. They're just unclear on the path to each one.

#### **5. “What does it take to go to heaven? How sure are you, on a scale of 1-10, that you'll go to heaven?”**

Now, the questions move to the person's understanding of their salvation and relationship with God. We're now asking them to think about their personal standing before God. Here's a pro-tip: questions that use a 1-10 scale are wonderfully thought-provoking. I ask them all the time! If somebody says they're a 7, then you can reply, “Oh, interesting! Why are you a 7 instead of a 9 or 10?” Or if they say they're a 9, you can say, “That's cool. Why are you a 9 instead of something like a 5 or 6?” This causes people to think more deeply and discover what, if anything, they're actually trusting in for their salvation.



6. “Suppose you were to stand before God today and he asked you, ‘Why should I let you into heaven?’ What would you think to say?”

This question was made popular by the time-tested curriculum, Evangelism Explosion. The power of this question lies in its ability to differentiate whether a person trusts their own works to get them into heaven or trusts in the finished work of Christ. It demonstrates whether they believe in works or grace for salvation. It’s also a great segue into the gospel. We can eventually ask, “Would you mind if I share with you how the Bible says we might answer that question?”

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These six questions have served me well in evangelistic conversations. But there are lots of interesting questions you can ask people. Here are some additional ones that you can ask. Remember, the goal isn’t to manipulate the other person in any way. The goal is to help them think about their eternal condition and whether they have a relationship with God. Good questions are open-ended – not “yes” or “no” – and interesting.

- If you could ask God one question and know He would answer, what would you ask?
- Where do you think our sense of right and wrong comes from?
- Why do you think there is so much pain and injustice in the world?

- Do you think people are basically good, or do we all fall short in some way?
- How do you handle times when life becomes difficult or painful?
- Have you ever had a dream or an inner prompting that you felt was deeply meaningful or maybe even from God?
- What do you think it means to know God personally rather than know about Him?
- Are there particular moments in your life when you felt closest to God? How close do you feel to God right now?
- If you were to describe where you are on your spiritual journey, how would you put it?
- What do you know about Jesus and what He taught? What do you find most compelling or confusing about Him?
- Have you ever looked into the evidence for Jesus's life and resurrection?
- How do you typically experience prayer? Do you feel connected with God when you pray?
- If God offered you forgiveness and eternal life as a gift, would you want it? Why or why not?
- What would keep you from wanting to fully trust God with your life?



## L - LISTEN TO ANSWERS

If you're like me in conversations, rather than deeply listening to the other person, you catch yourself thinking of the next thing you're going to say. Instead of listening well, we're trying to make our points. Listening well and having a genuine curiosity about the other person show that we care about them.

Additionally, in the age of the internet, many people are less skilled in having face-to-face conversations. Many of the Christian students in our campus ministry were engineering majors who are not famous for their interpersonal skills. (I studied mathematics and am a kindred spirit.) That's why we need reminders of what good, active listening involves. Let's strive to be good, curious, active listeners, and sincerely seek to understand their views.

So, as you are asking questions in evangelism, here are some tips for great listening:

- **Make eye contact; smile, nod your head at appropriate times.** You would think this would go without saying, but I have to remind myself to do this constantly. Sometimes we're afraid we'll be too enthusiastic and come across as weird. It is possible to be too excited. But most of the time, especially for men, we come across as less interested than we actually are. Show people through our body language that we care what they're saying.
- **Don't settle for surface-level answers.** Always try to go a little deeper. Ask many follow-up questions. Be gentle but curious.
- **Ask clarifying questions.** After they give their initial answer, say, "Tell me what you mean by that. I'm interested." Or, "Tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_. " You can also ask, "Could you explain what you meant when you said \_\_\_\_\_? I want to make sure I understand." Or, "Let me make sure I understand what you're saying. Can I repeat what I think you're saying and you tell me if I've got it?"

## T - TELL THE GOOD NEWS

At some point in the conversation, after you've asked some great questions and sought to understand the person's relationship with God, it's time for a transition. You must decide whether you will attempt to share the gospel with them. In reality, sometimes, sharing might not be the right thing to do. Ask God for wisdom about whether you should share. If the person isn't in a good mental or emotional state or if they're dismissive or in a rush, it might not be the right time. However, if the conversation has been positive and you've made a connection, go for it!

Now remember, up until now, you've only received permission to ask about their spiritual beliefs. Make sure you honor that permission. The next step is to thank them for sharing, then ask permission again for you to share with them. Here are some examples of precisely what you could say:

- “Thank you so much for sharing with me. I appreciated hearing your perspective. Hey, if you’re interested, I’d love to share with you something I’ve learned about how to have a relationship with God. It would only take a couple of minutes. Is that okay?”
- “Could I share a little illustration (or booklet) with you that’s helped me know God better? It only takes a couple of minutes.”
- “Hey, I have a little booklet (or illustration) that summarizes the entire Bible in just a couple of minutes. Would you be interested in seeing it? May I show it to you?”
- “I have a personal story about how I learned how to have a relationship with God. Could I share that with you? It will only take a couple of minutes.”
- “We’ve been talking about how to have a relationship with God. Could I show you just a few verses in the Bible that talk about that exact thing?”

If they say yes, then a curious non-Christian has just asked you to share the gospel with them. That is the golden opportunity! At this point, you can share a simple gospel presentation that includes the life and work of Jesus, his resurrection from the dead, the offer of salvation, and the necessary response of repentance and faith.



## Y - YES OR NOW: INVITE THEM TO RESPOND

The final step in SALTY is to invite people to respond. Scripture makes clear how people should respond to the gospel: repent and believe (Mark 1:15). Inviting a response can be the scariest part of an evangelism conversation. But here's what I've noticed. If we share with many people and invite them to respond, we will get to see some put their trust in Jesus!

Early on in our campus ministry, we bought into some short-sighted theology that taught that a false conversion to Christianity was to be avoided at all costs. They made it seem like an insincere conversion to faith was worse than no conversion at all. Certain teachers complain about evangelism practices like an "altar call" or a "sinner's prayer" that they view as manipulative. And, I agree to some degree. We certainly don't want to manipulate people to recite an empty prayer and have a false sense of eternal security.



However, in the parable of the soils (Matthew 13:1-9), Jesus described the four responses to the gospel and compared them to four types of soil. In the second soil, the seed sprouts quickly but withers because it never develops a root. Even Jesus acknowledges that some people will seem to respond with faith, then fall away because they never truly believed. Our job is to sow as many gospel seeds as possible.

One summer, we had a revelation while reading Acts 2. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles, and Peter preached to the crowd in the Temple courts. He proclaimed that Jesus was the promised Savior, that he was crucified and resurrected. The crowd believes Peter's message! However, that belief wasn't enough to make them Christians, and they knew it. They cried out, "Brothers, what must we do to be saved?"

Then it dawned on us: lost people don't know how to be saved. They don't know how to repent of their sins and put their trust in Jesus. They need people who know Jesus to show them how to meet him, too! So Peter responded, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and you too will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." This response calls people to turn from sin (repent) and identify themselves with Jesus (be baptized), and they'll become a Child of God! That summer, we decided that whenever we shared the gospel – whether in a one-on-one setting or a group – we would offer an opportunity for people to respond. And that next fall semester, dozens of people started saying yes!

How does this play out in an evangelism conversation? You might ask a question like this: “The Bible says there are two kinds of lives: One where we put ourselves on the throne of life. And the other is where we surrender to Jesus and let him rule our lives. Which of these best represents your life? Which do you want to represent your life?”

My friend Steve Shadrach calls this the “golden question.” You ask, “Would you like to pray and receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior today? I can help you.” Then we close our mouths, don’t say anything! Give them time to think, count the cost, and answer. If they say no, then ask, “What is keeping you from making this decision?” If they say yes, then guide them in a simple prayer where they tell God they believe the truth about Jesus, want to turn from a self-focused life, and choose to receive Jesus as their King. Then congratulate them on becoming part of the family of God!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What did you like about the SALTY method?

What do you see as the strengths of this approach to evangelism?

What questions or uncertainties do you have about SALTY?

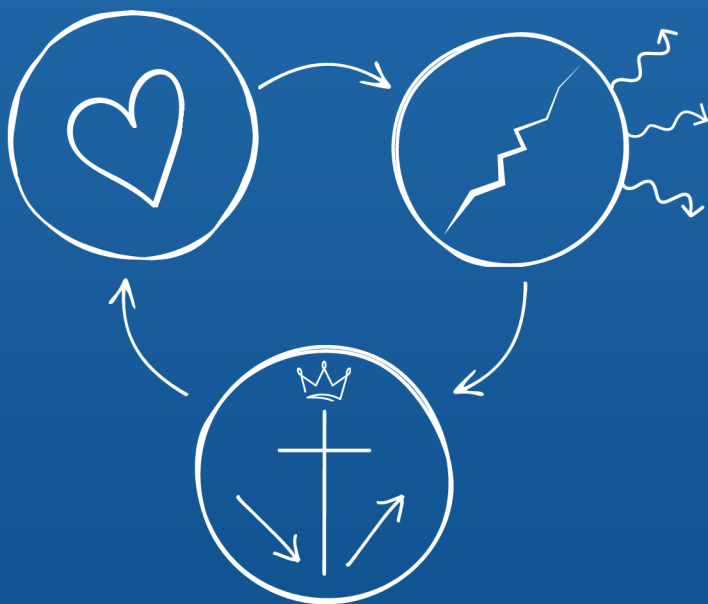
How could you use it at your school or neighborhood?

How might you use SALTY with friends and family?

Scale of 1-10, how open are people in your school, neighborhood, and family to talk about spiritual beliefs?

Describe some conversations that you've had in the past. Who are 2-3 people who don't yet know Jesus that you want to pray for and share with?

# THE THREE CIRCLES



**A CLEAR PRESENTATION  
OF THE GOSPEL**

. L. Moody was a well-known evangelist in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America. God used his evangelistic preaching to save thousands of people and inspire a generation of preachers who came after him. After Moody preached in a large venue, a woman confronted him and said, “Mr. Moody, I don’t like the way you do evangelism.” Moody replied politely, “Well, I don’t always like it myself. Tell me, how do you do it?” The woman admitted, “Well, I don’t do it.” Moody responded, “Then I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it.”

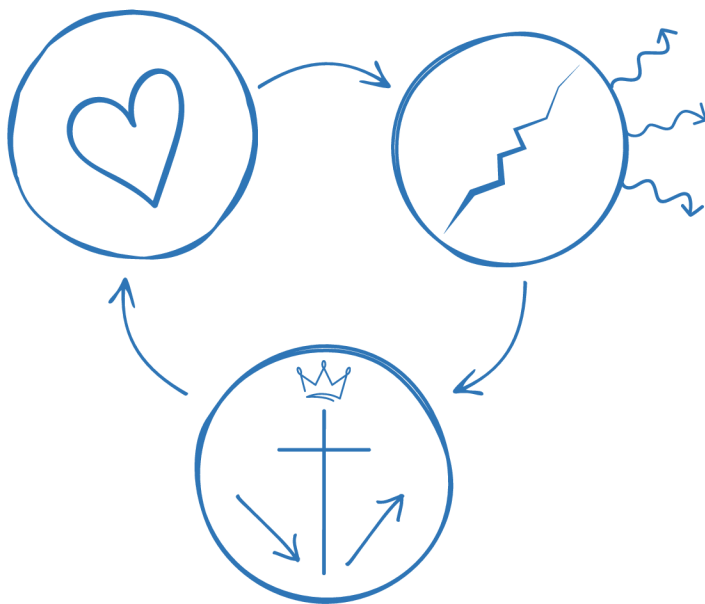
Memorizing a clear, concise gospel presentation helped give me confidence to enter into spiritual conversations with non-Christians. There’s not one right way to share the gospel. (But there are plenty of wrong ways.) There are numerous good summaries of the gospel message, including the Roman Road, the Bridge to Life Illustration, the Four Spiritual Laws, Steps to Peace with God, and more. People will sometimes ask me, “Which one of these is the best?” The answer is always, “The one you actually use!”

Early in my ministry, we made the mistake of teaching a different gospel presentation every time we taught students about evangelism. My philosophy was, “The more the merrier.” However, I soon realized that students knew parts of several presentations, but they couldn’t confidently share any of them. What a tragedy! From that point forward, we decided to choose one good gospel presentation. We would teach it, train students to share it, have them practice with one another... then teach it again. Repetition makes us more confident and skilled.

The Three Circles is an excellent summary of the message about Jesus first developed by Pastor Jimmy Scroggins for the North American Mission Board. It uses simple visuals that you can sketch on a piece of paper as you share with someone. You can cover the main points very quickly, or you can use Bible verses and explain them further. Let’s go through the Three Circles so you can learn it too!

## THE THREE CIRCLES THAT EXPLAIN HOW TO KNOW GOD PERSONALLY

This illustration summarizes the core message of the Bible, the good news about Jesus Christ. This message is more than a mere self-improvement plan. It is a lens that transforms how we see all of reality.







**GOD'S ORIGINAL DESIGN WAS A PERFECT WORLD WITH NO SUFFERING, WHERE EVERY PERSON COULD LIVE IN HARMONY WITH ONE ANOTHER AND WITH GOD.**

**God is the good creator,  
the source of everything  
that exists.**

**The Bible says...**

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." (Genesis 1:1,31)*

*"The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made."  
(Psalm 145:9)*



**God is personal and made each of us with a purpose – to know him, love him, and walk with him.**

*“This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent —Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3)*

**But when we look at the world, why do we see brokenness instead of the harmony that God intended?**



**EVERY PERSON HAS LIVED SELFISHLY AND PUSHED OUR CREATOR AWAY. THIS SEPARATION KEEPS US FROM LIVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S GOOD DESIGN AND CAUSES THE BROKENNESS WE SEE IN THE WORLD.**

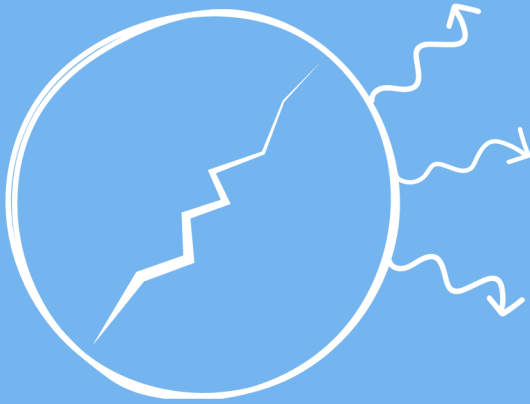
Life becomes broken when we ignore God, trying to make *ourselves* into god, and reject his design for our lives. The Bible refers to this rebellion against God as *sin*.

Sin devastates everything from world events down to our personal lives and our relationship with God. Because of sin, we all deserve death: separation from God.

*"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)*

*"For the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23)*

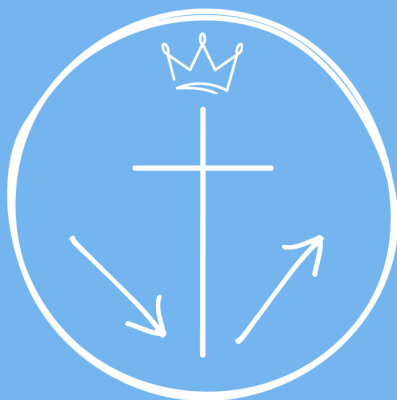
*"But your wrong-doings have kept you away from your God. Your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear." (Isaiah 59:2)*



**When we realize life isn't working, we look for a way out. People hope in relationships, career, wealth, addictions, sex, empty religion, and more. But none of these ultimately satisfy us.**

*"There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death." (Proverbs 14:12)*

**Brokenness can lead us to realize we need something greater. So where can we find hope?**



**GOD DID NOT ABANDON US. HE CAME TO EARTH AS JESUS CHRIST. JESUS LIVED A PERFECT HUMAN LIFE AND THEN DIED ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SIN.**

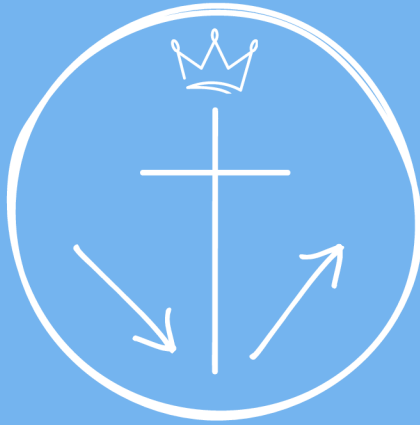
**AFTER THREE DAYS, HE WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD TO PROVE HIS VICTORY OVER OUR BROKENNESS AND SIN.**

**God loves you and wants you to be reconciled with him.**

*"For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)*

**The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the most important event in history.**

*"For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)*



**Because Jesus was both human and divine,  
He alone can reconcile humanity with God.**

*"I am the way, the truth, and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except  
through me." (John 14:6)*

*"I am the resurrection and the life. The  
one who believes in me, even if he dies,  
will live." (John 11:25)*

**How should we respond to this good news?**

# OUR RESPONSE

**YOU MUST MAKE A PERSONAL DECISION TO TURN FROM LIVING IN SIN AND BROKENNESS AND FOLLOW JESUS INSTEAD.**

**Simply hearing this Good News is not enough. God never forces people to follow him.**

*“Jesus said... Repent and believe the good news!”  
(Mark 1:15)*

**You must *admit* your sin and brokenness to God, stop trusting in other things and *trust* Jesus alone to save you, and *commit* your life to follow him. This is what it means to repent and believe.**

*“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)*



**Eternal life is not something you can earn by simply being a good person.**

*“For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift — not from works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

**Believing facts about Jesus is not enough. You must receive and follow Jesus.**

*“But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name.” (John 1:12)*

**So how do you do this?**



# WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Imagine two thrones that represent two kinds of lives. Your throne represents who's in charge of your life.



In the first throne, the self is in charge, and Christ is outside. In the second, Christ is on the throne, entrusted with your life.

Which circle best represents your life?

Which do you want to represent your life?

# YOU CAN RECEIVE JESUS RIGHT NOW THROUGH PRAYER.

**Prayer is simply talking to God.  
God is more concerned with your heart  
than your words.**

**Here is a suggested prayer. If you pray  
something like this with sincerity and  
surrender, God will honor your request.**

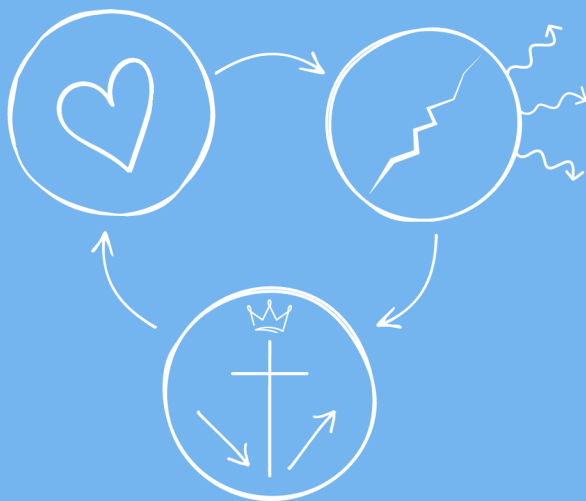
*"Dear God, I need you. I believe that my sin has broken my relationship with you. I want to turn from sin and follow you with all my strength. I believe that Jesus was your perfect son who died on the cross for my sins and was raised to life. Please forgive me, save me, restore my relationship with you, and give me eternal life. Help me trust and follow Jesus from this day forward. Amen."*



## YOUR RESPONSE

*Would you like to start following Jesus today?*

*If you're not ready, what's the next step you'd like to take?*



**Did you pray and receive Jesus? He wants you to know that you are forgiven and saved!**

**Read the following Bible verses and answer the three questions below.**

*"<sup>11</sup>And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup>The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life. <sup>13</sup>I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:11-13)*

**Where does eternal life come from? (Verse 11)**

**Who has eternal life? (Verse 12)**

**Why were these verses written? (Verse 13)**

# YOUR NEXT STEPS



## WELCOME TO GOD'S FAMILY! NOW YOU CAN GROW IN YOUR NEW FAITH!

*"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18)*

### How can you grow in faith?

- **GOD'S WORD:** *Get a Bible and begin reading it every day. Start with the book of Mark.*
- **PRAYER:** *Spend time throughout the day talking with God like he's a friend.*
- **CHURCH:** *Join a church that teaches the Bible and where the people love one another.*
- **BAPTISM:** *This is the public acknowledgment that you're now following Jesus.*
- **WITNESS:** *Tell someone you care about that you've decided to follow Jesus.*

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What do you like the most about the Three Circles?  
What are its strengths and weaknesses as a gospel tool?

What other gospel tools or illustrations have you learned and how do they compare?

On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you that you could clearly share the Three Circles?

In the space below or on a sheet of paper, practice drawing and narrating the Three Circles. Get with a partner and take turns practicing. Don't forget to practice the "two thrones" illustration as well.

Remember the 2-3 non-Christians whom you prayed for in the last chapter, and pray again that God would open their heart and allow you to share.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Gary serves as Director of Training for Texas Baptist Student Ministry, teaches collegiate ministry courses at Southwestern Seminary, cohosts the Campus Multiplication Network podcast with Paul Worcester, and leads Next Generation Outreach, a nonprofit organization dedicated to equipping and encouraging leaders to reach the next generation for Christ.

Gary moved his family to Dallas-Fort Worth in 2003 and served as Director of the Baptist Student Ministry at The University of Texas at Arlington for over twenty years. At UTA BSM, God allowed their team to develop an effective disciple-making movement, seeing hundreds of young adults come to Christ in a challenging, diverse metro context with graduates leading ministries and starting churches across Dallas-Fort Worth and around the world.

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