

# Start with the Gospel

The Most Important Thing You Can Do Before Your Next Study

*A guide for trainers, sponsors, and ministry leaders*

## INTRODUCTION

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*"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."  
— 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 (ESV)*

Paul didn't assume the church already had the gospel figured out. He reminded them of it. He called it the thing of first importance — not a starting point to move past, but a foundation to return to again and again. If the apostle Paul believed the church needed to be reminded of the gospel, so do our small groups.

## WHY START WITH THE GOSPEL?

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Every group is a mixed room. Some people sitting in your circle have been following Jesus for years. Others are still figuring out what they believe. Some walked away from faith and are finding their way back. And some may be hearing the gospel clearly for the very first time — even if they've been in church their whole lives.

Starting a new semester, a new series, or a new group with a clear gospel presentation honors every person in that room. It gives newer believers a foundation to stand on. It gives seekers a chance to respond. And it reminds more mature believers of the very thing their faith is built on — because the gospel is not just how we enter the Christian life, it is the foundation of everything that follows.

There is also a practical reason to start here. When leaders teach the gospel visually and then have participants practice sharing it themselves, something shifts. People engage differently. They lean in. They ask questions they've been holding onto for years. The gospel becomes something they own — not just something they've heard.

## HOW THESE RESOURCES WORK

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**The facilitator guides are training tools.** They walk a leader through how to present the gospel visually to a group, facilitate partner practice, and close with a salvation invitation. They are ideal for ministry teams, small group leader trainings, or any setting where you want to equip believers to share their faith with more confidence.

**The participant handouts are study tools.** After the large group gospel presentation, small groups use the handout to explore a Bible passage that shows the gospel lived out in Scripture. Three passage options are available for the Three Circles and The Four — Luke 19:1–10, Ephesians 2:1–10, and 1 Corinthians 15:1–11 — so leaders can choose the one that best fits their group.

**The Bridge participant handout, called The Bridge Discovery Experience, works a little differently.** It is designed as a deeper personal and small group discovery experience — walking participants through the scriptures behind the gospel, inviting them to write the gospel in their own words, and exploring what salvation starting now, salvation being secure, and growing in faith actually look like. It works beautifully in a small group setting and is also a meaningful tool for one-on-one discipleship.

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT VISUAL

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Each of the three gospel visuals has its own strengths — and the right one depends on your group and your setting.

**The Three Circles** gives the fullest picture of the Christian life. It shows not just how the gospel saves us, but what God restores us to and what He sends us to do — Grow and Go. It is a slightly more intricate drawing, but once participants learn it they have a complete gospel framework they can carry into any conversation.

**The Four** uses four simple symbols — a heart, a division sign, a cross, and a question mark — making it easy to draw and easy to remember. It covers the same essential gospel message in a format that feels approachable for both the person sharing and the person hearing it.

**The Bridge** is anchored in a single verse — Romans 6:23 — which makes it uniquely memorable. When participants learn to walk someone through the gospel using that one verse, they discover that the gospel is already in their hands every time they open their Bible. It is especially effective one-on-one and in smaller, more conversational settings.

You do not need to use all three. Pick the one that fits your group and your context, print the facilitator guide, choose a participant handout version, and you are ready to go.

## A NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR

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One more thing worth noting — **the practice of drawing and sharing the visual is essential.** That hands-on repetition is exactly what makes the gospel stick. The natural outcome is that once participants have drawn it, explained it, and practiced it with a partner, the visual lives in their memory. They can walk someone through the gospel in any conversation, any setting, with or without a pen or paper — because the picture is already in their head.

### REFLECT & CONNECT

*Starting with the gospel sets the tone for everything that follows. It grounds your group in what matters most and creates space for both clarity and response.*

*As you prepare, choose the visual that best fits your group, make time for practice, and trust God with the results. Your role is to be clear and faithful — He is the one who transforms hearts.*