



# MESSAGE GUIDE

For Sept. 21,  
2025



John 3:14-17  
**Rick Grover,**  
**LEAD PASTOR**

## CONNECTION - 1: CONNECT WITH THE GOSPEL

Today we're kicking off a brand-new series called, "Connection." Over the next four weeks, we're going to be taking a look at how to:

- Connect with the Gospel
- Connect with your purpose
- Connect with others
- Connect through prayer

This whole series gets at the heart of who we are as a church and what we're called to do. What we're going to unpack in this series is how to have a good connection with the core of what Christianity is about; how to have a good connection with the Gospel, with God's purpose in your life; with others through discipleship; through prayer. And with each of these four connections, we are going to introduce tools/resources to help us. Today, we are going to take a close look at how to connect to the Gospel!

### 1. IF SOMEONE ASKED YOU, "WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?" HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

When we take a look at our Christian life, the "why" we do what we do, the "what" we are trying to accomplish, all comes down to the simple message of Christianity which is called, "The Gospel." And what does "gospel" mean? Gospel = Good News from euangelion: eu = good, angellion = news. And what is this news that's so good? That's the whole story starting with Gen. 1 and going all the way through Rev. 22.

In Genesis 1-2, God created the universe, galaxies, our world, and then He created humanity to be in a relationship with Him. But we read in Genesis 3, how humanity chose to go its own way. And then the rest of the Bible is God's story of redemption—how He pursued humanity to come back into a right relationship with Him. That goes all the way to Jesus being the One who brings us into that relationship with God, which ends with Rev. 22 where there is a new heaven and a new earth—Eden restored.

Notice that this story of redemption is not about the pursuit of "right religion," but the pursuit of a "right relationship." There is a difference between religion and Christianity. Religion is humanity's attempt to get to God (which is defined by whatever religion it is). Christianity is God's desire to get to us through Jesus.



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**RELIGION:** A system of beliefs and practices.

**CHRISTIANITY:** A relationship with Jesus.

## 2. HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED RELIGION VS. RELATIONSHIP IN YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE? OR WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR PERCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY, IS IT A RELIGION OR A RELATIONSHIP?

Yes, Christianity has become a religion in the eyes of the world, like Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism. And Christianity is a religion in the sense that we do have a system of beliefs and practices. But it's unlike other religions, because it is built on a personal relationship with its Founder—Jesus—who is alive. We have a relationship with Him not just a belief in what He taught. In Islam it is a belief in the dogma of the Koran, but its founder, Mohammed, is dead. Same thing in Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, etc. But in Christianity, it's not just a belief in a set of doctrines but a relationship with the very One who brings us to God. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." (1 Peter 3:18, ESV)

For some Christians, when they think of the Gospel, they just think of Jesus—for He is the center of the Gospel. The Apostle Paul wrote this to the church in Corinth: "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you. . . 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 15:1-4, ESV)

The Gospel is about Jesus; His Death, Burial, and Resurrection (DBR). No Jesus, no Good News. But the Gospel doesn't start with the DBR, it starts with GOD. And why is that important?

# 1- Jesus, God in the flesh, came to us out of response to our sin. So, even though Jesus existed from before the foundation of the world, He didn't come to fulfill His role until after we blew it. So, before sin, before the need for redemption, there was GOD.

# 2- We tend to make everything about us, and we like to start with ourselves! Let's face it, that's what consumer Christianity is all about—it's about you. Come to Jesus, and He'll fill the void in your life. He has the power to bring healing to your marriage. He will help you raise your children. He will give you strength to face that annoying boss. And while these things are true, when we make Christianity centered around us, then we start to use Christianity like we use a drug—you take it to make the pain go away and make you feel better, rather than about a relationship in the here and now that guides you for the life to come.



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### 3. ARE YOU USING YOUR CHRISTIANITY TO BE CENTERED MORE ON YOU OR YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

The first question, was how would answer if someone asked you “what is the Gospel?” So, if you had an opportunity to share the Gospel with that person, what would you do?

Steps for Spiritual Conversations (See Resource):

- First, Pray
- Second, Build a relationship
- Third, Listen then talk

As you are building a relationship and building trust, take some risk by asking them to share about their faith journey. And at some point, whether in that same conversation or later, ask if you can share with them a part of your faith journey.

B.E.S.T. Approach for sharing your faith/spiritual journey:

- Before I became a Christian
- Events leading up to my becoming a Christian
- Salvation
- Today, what is my life like?

Our faith journey starts with a belief that God exists. If He exists then who is He? Why am I here? What does He want with me? Use Scriptures to guide you to help others answer these questions (see resource).

### 4. WHAT ABOUT YOU PERSONALLY? WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE? WHAT IS “LIFE”? WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?

What if it's true that God exists? He's holy (that is perfect, unblemished), and He's love—fully love. And He created us in His image TO BE WITH HIM. If that's even possibly true, isn't it worth investigating? The truth of the matter is that your life, my life, all of humanity is on the line. The stakes are high, so isn't it worth checking out? That's what we want to help you do. Let's walk this journey of faith together.