

**Core Seminar**

**Evangelism**

**Class 1: God’s Purpose**

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Welcome to the Evangelism Core Seminar

Introduce yourself – Blake Rushing – Jonathan Morgan co-teacher

Pray

**Introduction**

This morning we begin a 13 week study about one of the main purposes of our life – to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In **Matthew 28:18-20** we read:

*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

That’s what this class is all about. We want to equip you, encourage you and exhort you to be disciple-makers.

Our primary text over the next 13 weeks will be the bible. There have been countless other books written on the subject of evangelism, and we will highlight some of them from time to time, but we believe God has spoken to us in His word and that it equips us for every good work, including evangelism (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Before we look at the lessons we’ll be covering, I want to make an important point of clarification. This course is ***not*** intended for people who simply want to learn about sharing their faith. What I mean is that if you intend to come here, take some notes and stuff them away on a shelf to accumulate dust…please do ***not*** take this course.

The Bible is very clear that we are accountable for what we know. The last thing I want to do is teach you more lessons that you will be accountable for before Christ on the Day of Judgment. This course is not designed for experts or professional evangelists…this course is designed for people who want to, by the grace of God, learn how to better tell others about the Savior who came to rescue sinners from the wrath of God. This course is intended to be put into practice.

Now, I don’t say these things to scare you, but if you are like me, you need to be reminded of the sobering reality that what we are talking about today is ***not*** fun and games. Evangelism has to do with real people who need a real Savior. In this class we are talking about life and death, heaven and hell. We are talking about people being saved from the fury of God’s wrath through the person and work of the sinless Savior, Jesus Christ. This is weight stuff!

For most of us, if we are honest, evangelism is intimidating. I believe however that God can ***and will*** give us abundant grace to be faithful in telling others about His Son.

Any questions?

In today’s class, we hope to do three things:

***First***, we want to give a brief overview of the class topics so you can know what we’ll be talking about in the weeks to come.

***Second***, we are going to walk from Genesis to Revelation to get the big picture of what God is doing in history (FYI, we’ll spend most the time in Genesis).

***Third***, we will highlight several implications about evangelism that we will revisit throughout the semester.

**I. Overview**

When we approach the subject of evangelism, there are countless areas we could discuss, but in this class we have selected lessons we feel are the most important and then some practical how-to classes in the second half with maybe a guest teacher or two!

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| **Session Titles and Description**   1. Are You Into What God’s Up To? Evangelism and God’s Purpose in History 2. What is our Role in Evangelism? God’s Sovereignty and Man’s Responsibility 3. What is the Gospel? Defining the Truth that Saves Sinners 4. So What Happened To You? Learning How to Share the Gospel Through Your Testimony 5. They Believe this Too? The Local Church and the Power of Corporate Witness 6. How Do I Get Others on Board? Discipling Others in Evangelism 7. What if They Reject Me? Rejection, Follow-up & the Fear of Man 8. But What if They Ask…? Answering Objections to the Gospel 9. How Do I Get Started? Being Intentional & Strategic in Evangelism 10. How Do I Share the Gospel with Family and Co-Workers? 11. How Do I Share the Gospel with Catholics? 12. How Do I Share the Gospel with Jews? 13. How Do I Share the Gospel with Muslims? |

**II. The Big Picture from Scripture**

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Genesis 1:1**. “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*”

Have you ever wondered why was God lonely?

Was God bored?

Did God need creation and people because He lacked something?

I once heard a preacher explain that “one day God became lonely, so He created man so He would have someone to love.” That sure is sad isn’t it…poor God. But is that true?

I believe one of the best ways to answer the question of why God created is to ask the question “who.” Who is this God who created? So, you tell me, when we read through the Bible who do we see that God reveals Himself to be?

[Ask the class]

What are the characteristics of God? Chapter and verse would be helpful![[1]](#footnote-1)

One of the most amazing things we see about God as He has revealed Himself is that He is Trinity. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are three distinct divine persons who have eternally existed as the One true God. While we could talk forever about what it means for God to be Trinity, I want us to consider one particular aspect of this reality. For God to be Trinity highlights the fact that He is able to be loving. The Father has eternally loved the Son and the Son has eternally loved the Spirit – they have forever dwelt in a perfect relationship of love and glory.

The reason this is important for our discussion is because it helps us to realize that when God created the universe and the world and the people who live in it, He didn’t do it because He needed anything. God was not lonely or bored. He always has been and always will be perfect and complete in who He is.

Rather, God created out of love, out of a desire to share His glory. The most loving thing God could do is share Himself. And that is the reason the Bible says that God created all things: to display His glory in full measure and allow us to share in His love along with other beings. (Isa. 43:7)

Look at with me at **Genesis 1:26** and **2:7-9** [read]. In these verses we see that God created people in His own image. This means that, in a sense, God has made us to be like Him. God has made us to reflect His character, to rule His creation as His stewards and to have a relationship with Him. God made us to know Him, to reflect Him and to love Him.

Adam and Eve’s relationship with God was not an abstract concept though. Rather, it was a relationship of blessings and boundaries. Read **Genesis 2:16-17** with me [read].

What do we see in these verses?

First, I want you to notice the freedom God gives to Adam and Eve…“*you may surely eat of every tree of the garden.*”

Did you see that? “It’s all yours! I made it for you! Enjoy it! Feast upon it! Eat from those trees and with every bite remember that I gave it to you to enjoy!” God made the world good and made it for us to delight in…and that gives God glory.

Enjoyment however must be guarded by God’s truth. In light of this, our second observation should be the restriction. God gave a command and a consequence in v. 17; “*but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*.”

God is holy – He is holy, holy, holy. If man were to rebel against Him, He would judge him. Man is created to know Him, enjoy Him and worship God. By doing these things, man gives God glory.

Before we pick up speed, I want you to notice **Genesis 2:25** [read]

Can you imagine that? A world of perfection. No fear. No jealousy. No haunting memories. No calloused hearts. No regret. No blame. No shame. They knew nothing but life and love and joy and freedom and perfect holiness. That is what we were created to know.

Things did not remain this way however. Look with me at **Genesis 3:1-6** [read].

A new character is on the scene. A liar, a tempter, a deceiver – the bible tells us his name is Satan. What is Satan doing here? He tempts Eve. He tells her, “God’s holding out on you! You want real freedom? Real happiness? Real excitement? Trust me, take a bite – God’s way is not best, things will be better if you just indulge your desires!” Sound familiar? Same old song. Eve listened, so did Adam.

They ate what God told them not to. They rejected God. They rebelled against the Lord of glory and followed their own way.

And what happened? Did things get better? No. In fact, just like God promised, they died. Sin entered in and every aspect of their world was crushed. Look at **Genesis 3:7** [read].

Sin destroyed their understanding of who they were. Once they were free, now they are filled with shame and fear and guilt. So what did they do? They patched themselves up with fig leaves. Anything they can do to take away the pain. Sound familiar? It’s the same thing we see in our world today. Sin has confused us and now we scurry about with fig leaves that look like cars, sinful relationships, accomplishments, portfolios – anything…anything to numb the pain. But sin’s destruction didn’t stop there.

Look with me at **3:8-11**. These are some of the saddest verses in the Bible. God and man used to walk together in the cool of the day (talk about a quiet time!). No longer. Now they hide from Him out of fear. What does God do? What does He say? This is the first question in the Bible. “Where are you?” Why did God ask this? Was He confused? No. What was He doing? What did He want from them? He wanted a confession. He wanted them to come out and say…I did it. I sinned. I ate. I didn’t trust you. I didn’t believe that You ways were right or that you were good. I sinned. Instead, they hid. And that’s what we’ve been doing ever since. We’re hiding. We make up excuses, develop philosophies, conjure up false religions, we do whatever we must to explain Him away. We hide. But God’s response remains the same…“where are you?” This question, by the way, is part of evangelism. On behalf of the Lord we come and ask for people to be honest about where they are with God. More on this later in the summer.

Finally, notice that sin also destroys their relationship with one another. Read **3:12**. What has happened to their perfect relationship? Now it’s filled with resentment and blame and bitterness. Adam blames Eve and God. This is what sinful man does. Sin hates to be in the light and it will do whatever it can to keep from being exposed, especially blame others.

So, what should God have done right here? He should smash them. Because He is holy, He should crush them, judge them and cast them forever under His wrath in Hell. That is what God would do if He were fair. But instead…God promised to crush another. God promised to judge another. God promised to pour out His wrath on another.

Look at **Genesis 3:14-19**. In these verses God responds to man’s rebellion by proclaiming a three-fold curse on Satan, the woman and the man. To Satan, on your belly. To the woman, pain in birth and struggle in your role. To the man, pain in work. Thorns and thistles will come up from the ground. To all humans, you will die.

Notice however that God doesn’t just curse them. He also gives them a promise…a promise that will guide the course of history and the hope of the world.

Look again at **Genesis 3:15**. When He curses the serpent, God says this “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*”

God gives the promise that a singular man will come, he will be bruised or wounded by the serpent, but that in the end, He will crush His head. God promises to send a deliverer. One who will stand up to the enemy and defeat Him but in the process He will Himself be wounded. Sound familiar? This is called the protoevangelium – the first gospel proclamation.

After this promise God then gave them a picture to help them remember the promise. Look at **3:21** with me [read]. What has God done there? God has made them garments of skin. How do you get garments of skin? Something has to die. An innocent animal’s blood is shed and now God strips off Adam and Eve’s fig leaves of self-righteousness and clothes them with the blameless garments of one who died in their place. Sound familiar? That is a picture of what God does for those who trust in Christ.

In **3:24** God kicked Adam and Eve out of the garden, put a cherubim angel with a flaming sword to keep them from the tree of life…and the waiting began.

*Who will the seed of woman be?*

*What will He look like?*

*How will we recognize Him?*

This is what the rest of the Old Testament is about, anticipation, somebody is coming! A deliverer is coming who will defeat Satan, clothe them with innocence and restore them to God!

*But when will He come?*

*Who will this innocent lamb be?*

Genesis 5 lists name after name like a phone book up to a man named Noah, whose name means “rest.” So the reader wonders, will Noah be the one who will give rest to the sin stained world? Not ultimately, but another picture of Christ was given. God promised a flood judgment was coming and whoever entered the ark in faith passed through the judgment and was brought into a new world. Sound familiar?

Following the flood, man’s rebellion continued and they built a tower where they sought to exalt themselves to the heavens for their own glory. What did God do? Judged them and sent them out confused and without direction. But in the midst of that darkness God called out a man named Abraham through whom He made the nation Israel. He promised Abraham that he will be blessed and that through his descendants all of the world will be blessed. From this we come to understand that the seed of woman, the promised one, will be a descendant of Abraham.

From that time Israel’s history goes like this…they moved to Egypt because of a famine from which God delivered them. They became enslaved under a wicked Pharaoh from which God delivers them through a man named Moses. One of the final acts of deliverance came when God called the nation to shed the blood of an innocent lamb and smear it on their door frames as a testimony of their faith in God’s promise to pass over them and not judge them. Those who do so lived, those who didn’t lost their firstborn children in judgment.

Following this, God miraculously lead them through the Red Sea and to a place called Mount Sinai. There God gave His law to His people so they would know who He is and how He requires them to live. Because God knew they wouldn’t keep His Law perfectly, he provided a sacrificial system through which a priest offered up an innocent lamb as an act of faith that God would pass over their sins. Now, we know from the New Testament (Hebrews 9-10) that these offerings were mere shadows pointing to an ultimate sacrifice who would come…it was intended to stir up anticipation. Year after year…animals and blood…offerings and prayers.

Along the way Israel often rebelled and God dealt with them for their sins, but He never forgot or forsook them. Instead He made them more promises and provided more mercy to them. In the days of Samuel, they asked for a king so they would be like the rest of the nations (1 Sam. 8). After giving them a wicked king, God promised to raise up a king after His own heart. He promised He would be a King from David’s line who would have a house, throne and a kingdom that would never end (2 Sam. 7:12-13).

God also gave promises to His people that this eternal king would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14), born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), would work miracles (Is. 35:5-6) and that ultimately He would be a suffering servant who would “be wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities” (Is. 52:12-53:12)! God gave all these things to stir faith in His people so they would trust Him to bring this seed of woman who would crush the serpent’s head.

That’s basically your Old Testament in a nutshell - God patiently giving promises to His children so they will look with anticipation for their fulfillment.

*Where is our Savior?*

*Where is the one born of a woman?*

*Where is the one born of Abraham?*

*Where is the king born of David?*

*Where is our high priest?*

*Where is the final lamb?*

Any questions?Well, then, at the fullness of time, God gave His Son Jesus to be born to the virgin Mary in the city of Bethlehem. Thousands of years of promises had echoed from that fateful day in the Garden of Eden – and finally they were fulfilled. Jesus came and lived a perfect life, He performed mighty miracles, He proclaimed God’s kingdom and hope for those who would repent and believe in Him. But rather than embrace Jesus as their Lord, the religious leaders of the day ordered that He be put to death. And He was.

Jesus, the sinless Son of God, was forsaken by the ones He came to save. He was betrayed, arrested, mocked, beaten…and He was crucified. At that moment, all of history came into focus. Years earlier in a garden humanity had fallen because they forsook God to taste of a tree…and now…after many painful days under sin’s reign…that same God was forsaken again…but this time for their sake. Jesus was nailed to a tree to receive the curse and the shame and the judgment that we sinful humans deserved. Do you remember when God cursed the ground after Adam’s fall? Do you remember what came up from the ground? Thorns and thistles. On the cross that day Jesus wore a crown of thorns…not a crown of gold or silver or jewels, rather…our king’s glory was to wear our curse upon His head. God’s wrath and fury for sin was poured out upon the sinless Son of God. Before He died, He cried out, “It is finished!”…and it was. He had come to die for sinners and satisfy God’s wrath…it was finished.

Do you remember what happened after Jesus died? The curtain in the temple was torn in two (Mt. 27:51). That curtain was created to keep sinful man from approaching the holy God. Do you know what was embroidered on the curtain of the temple? Exodus 26:31 tells us Cherubim were. Do you remember when Adam and Eve were removed from the Garden what God put to keep them from the tree of life? A cherubim with a sword. Through Christ’s death, we now have access into the place where God is. Through His death, the curtain is torn, the sword is removed and we can know our Creator again.

After Jesus died they placed Him in a grave. And for three days He laid dead. Until that fateful morning when God rolled back the stone and the world saw that Jesus had risen from the dead! He is alive! The Son of God defeated sin, Satan and death! After his resurrection He appeared for forty days to many and told His disciples that He was going away. But while He was gone He left them with the greatest of tasks: **Matthew 28:18-20** Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” After saying these words (which parallel the ones in Acts 1:8) He ascended to the right hand of the Father where He now intercedes on our behalf.

Pentecost came ten days after Jesus’ ascension. At Pentecost, God gave the Holy Spirit to His disciples. Following this they took the Gospel to the ends of the earth calling people to repent and believe in Jesus the promised Lord and Savior of the world. They told the world that Jesus was a King who was soon coming to judge His enemies, but that He was also a gracious King who delighted in extending mercy. They were faithful to the Gospel message and because of it they endured persecution, trial, suffering and the joy of seeing countless people trust in Christ.

This is what has been going on for the past 2,000 years of history. Followers of Christ have been laying down their lives to proclaim the good news that God saves sinners who trust in Christ. This is why we are here this morning because we believe that Jesus is our Lord and Savior and that the only hope for the world is for them to believe in Him.

While we proclaim the Gospel, we keep in view the fact that God’s mercy does not last forever. There is a day coming when Jesus will return and will call all people to account. Look with me briefly as I read from Revelation **19:11-16** [read]… Jesus is coming to judge the world. Look with me at **Revelation 20:11-15** [read]…a day of judgment is coming. Flip over to **Revelation 21:1-6** [read], now **22:1-4** [read].

Do you see where we end up? We are back to Eden. A new heaven and new earth. A new tree of life and a new river of life. No thorns on this shore. No crying in this garden. We are once again face to face with our creator.

Any questions?

Now that we have gone from Genesis to Revelation, I’d like us to conclude with a few principles from this study that we will come back to throughout our time together.

**III. Lessons We Must Remember**

1. The purpose of history is to bring God **glory**. (Isa. 43:7; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 1:16)

This means that everything we do in life, including evangelism ultimately is to display to the world that God is worthy of all our lives. This should be our primary motivation in proclaiming the Gospel. As John Piper says in His book Let the Nations Be Glad “missions exists because worship does not.” That means the reason we proclaim the Gospel, at home or abroad, is because people are not rightly worshipping Christ. We should call them to worship Him that He might receive the glory He deserves.

1. God is the **evangelist**, He delights in saving sinners. (Lk. 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15)

We must remember that God is the one who has compassion on the lost and the He is seeking and saving them. We are merely joining Him in His great purpose. Our purpose in life must be determined by God’s purpose. As we have seen His great love for sinners in our own salvation, we ought delight in joining Him to help others come to know Him.

1. We have been entrusted with the honor and responsibility of proclaiming the **gospel**. (Mt. 4:19, 28:18-20; Acts 1:7-8; 2 Cor. 5:16-21; 2 Tim. 4:5)

Evangelism is not an elective for the believer. It is a command and a responsibility. It is also an honor. We have the privileged position of introducing people to the King of Kings.

Any questions?**IV. Homework**

Homework? Yes, homework. Each week we will give you a few assignments to keep you help you grow throughout the week and better prepare to be a faithful evangelist.

1. Pray
   1. God to give you a heart for the lost
   2. Open doors to share the gospel
   3. Three people with whom to share the gospel – can be anybody created in the image of God!
2. Read through the *2 Ways to Live* booklet.

Any final lingering questions?

Pray.

1. Expect to hear things like sovereign, merciful, jealous, wrathful, holy, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, personal, love. I’d recommend translating the “omnis.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)