

Know What You Believe

by Dean Ridings and Mike Martin

Richard was startled by Jesus' words in Matthew 7:13-14, and rightly so. Here's what he read: "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

It's a reminder that there are two kinds of people in the world: those who are on the road to destruction and those who are on the road to life.

What startled Richard most is the conversation he recalled having with a co-worker who decided he would take the road to hell. He casually declared to Richard, "I want to go there because that's where all of my friends are." It was at that moment that Richard realized his co-worker was no longer living—and had received exactly what he asked for.

If that's disturbing, it ought to be! Richard had this realization in the midst of a morning Bible study with brothers who spur one another on in the way that's hard but leads to life. Do you have such support? If not, why not look into it?

Meanwhile, in your role as a Kingdom ambassador, God will give you opportunities to help others understand the consequences of their decisions for or against Christ. To help you to prepare, an essential strategy is to know what you believe.

One of Jesus' earliest public messages was "repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Just before He ascended to heaven He commanded His disciples, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15).

This is the primary way God brings people into the Kingdom. We are God's ambassadors, using the gospel as His tool for building His Kingdom. If we hunger to be Kingdom men and women, if we delight in what delights our King, we will share the gospel with people around us.

In order to do this, let's look at what the New Testament says about the gospel. What is this message of salvation? Here are seven key phrases the apostle Paul used to describe the gospel in **1 Corinthians 15:1-8**.

1. the gospel (vv. 1-2) – Only this gospel saves (also see Acts 4:12; Romans 1:16-17).

2. of first importance (v. 3). The gospel is the number-one priority. Discussing evolution versus creation, politics, or morality may simply prove to be distractions.

What are some other distracting peripheral issues?

If used correctly, peripheral issues could be avenues to the gospel message, but we must transition to the biblical gospel message as quickly as possible.

3. that He appeared (vv. 5-8) – This refers to eyewitness testimony of reliable people who could confirm Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (also see 1 John 1:1-3).

4. most of whom are still alive (v. 6) – This points to testimony that is verifiable (also see Acts 4:13; God's testimony is even greater than that of people, 1 John 5:9-13).

5. in accordance with the Scriptures (v. 4) – Biblical authority has been given in advance (also see Leviticus 16:1-22; Isaiah 53:4-12; Psalm 16:9-10; John 3:14-15; Numbers 21:4-9).

6. I preached to you (v. 1) – The gospel *must* be spoken, heard, and believed to have an impact (also see Romans 10:13-15, 17).

7. what I also received (vv. 3-4) – The gospel is about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and how God uses these events to bring people into a relationship with Him. Because of the eternal implications of this, we need to dig a little deeper and get a better handle on these crucially significant historical realities:

⊕ The Bad News:

- Humanity is dead in sin – Ephesians 2:1-3; Psalm 51:5; Romans 1:18; 5:12; 6:23; John 3:36

⊕ The Good News:

- Christ died for our sins – 1 Peter 2:24; Colossians 2:13-15; 2 Corinthians 5:21
- The Spirit of God raised Jesus from the dead – 1 Corinthians 15:20-21; Luke 24:1-8; Romans 8:11
- By faith in Jesus, we have new spiritual life – Ephesians 2:4-10; John 10:10; Romans 6:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Questions to consider:

- ⊕ In sharing the gospel, why is it important to know *what* you believe?
- ⊕ Who in your world needs to hear the gospel—to join you on the road to life?
- ⊕ What is your next step?

