

Imagine if you were in a restaurant and you overheard this conversation taking place at a nearby table. You pick up the discussion after it has begun... and it is obvious that one of the people is a believer who is sharing the Gospel with an unsaved friend.

Well into the conversation... the non-believer erupts... *"Wait a minute, what are you trying to do to me?"*

The Christian responds, *"I'm trying to evangelize you."*

"You mean you're trying to convert me?"

"Yeah."

"You're trying to get me to adopt your view of spiritual reality and convert me?"

"Yeah."

*"How narrow! ... How awful! ... Nobody should say that their view of spirituality is better than anybody else... and try to convert them to it.
O no, no, no. Everybody should just leave everybody else alone."*

Many Christians would back way off at this point... and perhaps change the subject to one that is more friendly. ... But not this guy!

"Wait a minute ..." the Christian interjects. ... *"You want me to adopt your take on spiritual reality... You actually want me to adopt your view of all the various religions... believing with you that they are all a waste of time. ...
What are you doing to me? ... What you're saying is... you have a take on spiritual reality... and you think I would be better off... and the world would be better off... if we adopted your view on spiritual matters. ... I have my take on spiritual reality and I think mine is better than yours... and I'm doing*

*the **same thing** as you... I'm trying to convert you to mine If you tell me, 'Don't evangelize anybody...' then you are trying to evangelize **me** into your Western... white... individualistic... privatized understanding of religion."*

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Wouldn't it be great... if more and more of us broke away from feeling so **intimidated** about evangelizing others with the truth of the Gospel...? ... But instead... we've drifted by society's currents into the cultural backwaters... where we are content to paddle around in lifeless pools... fearful of being called "narrow-minded."

But... who's more narrow? ... *Everybody* makes exclusive truth claims Everybody has a take on reality... and is busy trying to convince others that their perceived reality is right. Everybody thinks the world would be better if those people over there adopted **my** understandings... **my** way of thinking. Narrowness is not the **content** of a truth claim. ... The voices of modern society all have their own content that they want others to adopt – it just so happens that it doesn't agree with the Christian's truth claims. Narrowness isn't **content** – it is the **attitude** toward the people who don't share the same point of view. ... and I dare say that the non-believing world around us is much more narrow than we are!

The gospel is not good instructions... not a good idea... and not good advice. ... The gospel is an announcement of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. ... But we fail to obey Christ's command to share this Gospel – because of our fear of being perceived as narrow-minded. ...

Another reason we do not evangelized others the way we know we should... is we don't like the discomfort of sounding rude or offensive.

Atheist Penn Jillette is one half of Penn and Teller, a duo that has been headlining Vegas shows for years with comedy and the art of illusion. Penn has never been shy about his disbelief in God, often writing about his conviction in articles and best-selling books. Yet in an on-line video blog, Penn shares a story about the time a gracious Christian businessman gave him a Bible as a gift. Penn goes on to use the story as an opportunity to point out that Christians who don't evangelize must really *hate* people. Here's the direct quote from his video blog:

I've always said, you know, that I don't respect people who do not proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think that, uh, well, it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward—and atheists who think that people shouldn't proselytize, [saying] "Just leave me alone and keep your religion to yourself"—uh, how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize them? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? I mean, if I believed beyond the shadow of a doubt that a truck was coming to hit you, and you didn't believe it, and that truck was bearing down on you, there's a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that.

Perhaps truer words... spoken by an atheist... have never been uttered.

A third reason... test and see if this has ever held you back from presenting the Gospel to someone who needs it... is that Christians have **not** taken the time to learn the basics of the Gospel. ... They don't know it well enough... and they fear they may say something wrong.

This is where I would like to spend the rest of our time this morning. ... Today we come to a passage in our study through Luke... where we see the basics of the Gospel message... all in one passage... and clearly presented.

If you have **not** familiarized yourself enough with the Gospel... to present it to another person... this is a passage... where you can learn the basics. ... You don't have to do a whole lot of Bible-thumping... chasing all over the Scriptures... or try to **remember** a lot of different places to look up with the person you are giving the Gospel to. ... It is all right **here**. ... There are other passages... like this one... where the Gospel is found in one place... such as John chapter three... Ephesians chapter two... and 1st Corinthians 15. ... But here in Luke... we find in these words of Christ... the essence of the Gospel which we all need to **know** ... and **keep ready** to share... whenever and wherever the Holy Spirit directs. ... Now here are the basics of how a person can experience a new birth... into the Kingdom of God.

I. We must have a child-like heart

Luke18:15-17

Jesus and His disciples are in Perea... on the east side of the Jordan River. He is on the last leg of His journey to Jerusalem... where He will die

for the sins of mankind. ... The crowds continue to gather around Him as He teaches on the kingdom of God... following His declaration to the Pharisees, "the kingdom of God is in your midst" (17:21). ... He was telling the Pharisees... and all others who were open to hear... that entry into this metaphysical spiritual kingdom... was possible for all who placed their faith in Him as their Messiah.

The Pharisees had rejected His spiritual kingdom... but several parents saw something of deity in the life and manner of Jesus. ... They moved closer to Him... hoping that Jesus might touch and bless their children. Luke makes it clear... that these children were **infants**... babies...!

It was customary for the Jews to bring little children to the rabbis to receive their special blessing... so it is strange that the disciples would stand in the way. ... The disciples' motivations are not entirely clear. ... At **best** they were protecting Jesus from what they deemed as interruptions or pressure. At **worst** they saw the situation as a waste of time. ... But **whatever** their motivation... Jesus used their intervention to give some of His most often quoted words. ... He did not talk about his love for children (as beautiful as that was)... or about parenting... or about blessings... or even about the spirituality of children... Rather... He spoke about the kind of people who enter the kingdom of God.

Notice Jesus' response (verse 16): "But Jesus called them to Him saying, 'Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs

the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

Mark writes that when Jesus saw what his disciples were doing... He was "**indignant**." (He had a righteous anger). ... Jesus **wanted** the children around Him... Why...? ... Because there were two valuable spiritual lessons that He wanted to teach: 1) The kingdom of God belongs to such as these; and 2) one must receive the kingdom of God... like an ordinary infant.

What is the distinctive of a newborn... that we must be like... in order for us to receive the kingdom of God ? - (ANSWER: Helplessness!)
Jesus has in mind here the initial condition ... that every child who has ever lived... (regardless of race, culture, or background)... has experienced — and that is a *helpless dependence*. ... A newborn... naked... with flailing hands and feet lifted toward the sky... is a heart-wrenching profile of helplessness. ... No human being is able to survive its earliest days and years... without the help of others.

Commentator Kent Hughes writes:

Every child born into the world is absolutely, completely, totally, actually helpless. And so it is with every child who is born into the kingdom of God. Children of the kingdom enter it helpless. If Billy Graham enters the kingdom, it will not be because he has personally preached to more people than any man in history. It will not be because he has remained impeccable in his finances when so many have failed. It will not be because he has been a faithful husband. It will not be because, despite his fame, he has remained a humble, self-effacing, kind man. When Billy Graham enters the kingdom, it will

be because he came to Christ as a helpless child. It will be because of God's undeserved kindness toward Billy's helplessness.

Luke 18:17

Have you ever witnessed a baby being held by his father ... way over the dad's head — and then suddenly dropped – but caught as the baby giggles and laughs...? ... The baby has complete trust in the dad. Now...this may sometimes be misplaced trust... dads sometimes get carried away and frighten the child... but... generally there is... nevertheless... complete and sincere trust. Babies need to trust others for everything — their food... their lodging... having their nose wiped and their bottoms cleaned. Everything concerning life... must be provided **for** them.

Those who receive the kingdom like a little child... must have this kind of a saving element of faith. ... It must be belief plus trust. ... They believe in Jesus... but it is more than a mind-belief — they trust Jesus for **everything** to do with salvation and life. Belief and trust...

It is also an - Untrained Humility

Babies have none of the various forms of pride adults are plagued with... Unlike the Pharisees... little children are not proud of their virtues — "*God, I thank you that I am not like all other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get*" (Luke 18:11, 12). ... A child does not battle self-righteousness in coming to Christ — "*Lord, I have been constant in my attendance for years.*"

I have sat at the Lord's Table for half a century. I give a lot of money to missions." No... Self-righteousness is impossible in a child!

Further, a little child is free from the pride of knowledge. ... Intellectual conceit is impossible. But children **are** teachable.... They receive the gospel without proposing amendments to it. ... "OK... *Here is how I want you to save me... here are my conditions... I want everything to make sense and be understood by me... nothing unexplained... " I want a perfectly smooth life... no hardships..."*

Because children have not developed the pride of adulthood... they readily repent. ... Untrained humility leaves a young soul open to receiving the greatest of gifts.

Untarnished Receptivity

Children know how to receive a gift — they simply take it. ... As David Gooding explains: "*A little child takes its food, its parents' love and protection, because they are given, without beginning to think of whether it deserves them or whether it is important enough to merit such attention. So must we all receive God's kingdom and enter into it (see Luke 18:17).*"

Babies have no thought of having to **earn** someone's favor. Likewise...the soul that receives the kingdom is grace-oriented. It is open to the unmerited favor of God.

How can we receive eternal life? ... We **must** come to Jesus with the trusting... humble... receiving heart of a child, and...

II. We must recognize that Jesus is God.

Luke 18:18-19

The rabbis were called "Master" (Teacher)... but it would have been blasphemous for a rabbi to be called "good." ... You see... the Jews reserved the word *good* only for God...

There is not one example in the *Talmud* of a rabbi being addressed as "good." ... So was the ruler's use of "good" here some sort of nervous or thoughtless flattery? ... Or was he actually sensing something in his heart about Jesus?

We don't know. ... But Jesus used the occasion to do some metaphysical probing... so the man would reflect upon his own soul. "*Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone*" ... This was a challenge to reflect on Jesus' ministry... as it related to God - Who is the only truly good person in existence. ... If the ruler could see this level of goodness in Jesus' ministry... he would realize that the kingdom of God was present. "Think, man! ... If I am good... and if only God is good... then who am I?... and what am I doing? ... Think!"

Jesus wanted to draw the man to make the necessary conclusion of Who Jesus is... But Warren Wiersbe writes:

His subsequent behavior proved that the young ruler did not believe that Jesus Christ was God. If he really thought he was in the presence of Almighty God, why did he argue politely about the Law, brag about his character, and then refuse to obey the Word? Surely he knew that God sees the heart and knows all things!

1 John 5:1 (ESV)

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God,

To enter the Kingdom of God...

I. We must have a child-like heart

II. We must recognize that Jesus is God. ...and

III. We must admit our sin and accept God's Terms. (God's conditions for dealing with them.)

Luke 18:20-27

In verse 18... we had seen him ask... "*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*" ... As a wealthy man... he was hoping to **do** something to assure his place in eternity... ... But this man also had a superficial view of his own sin... and both of these matters needed to be confronted. ... No doubt the young man sincerely tried to keep the Law... in fact... his sincerity may have been what brought him to Jesus... who he thought was a good teacher...

But in answer to this man's question on how to be saved... Jesus launches a discussion about... ... the Law !!!

Luke 18:20

Is Jesus indicating that the Law can save a person...?

No... Jesus did not quote the Law to him as a means of salvation. The Law makes a person aware of their sin... and confessing our sin is necessary in order to be saved. ... Jesus held the Law before the young man as a mirror to reveal his sins.

But the young man looked into the mirror and would not see the stains and blemishes in his life. ... Instead of using the Law in the proper way... this rich young ruler tried to use the Law to justify himself. ... But Jesus... knowing the young man's heart... that he had a problem with covetousness... asked him to do something that a covetous person would not do.

Nobody is saved by giving all his wealth to the poor... but nobody can be saved who will not repent of his sins and turn away from them. ... Jesus gave this man an opportunity to do just that... but this young man was possessed by the love of money and he would not let go.

But when Jesus gave him opportunity to confess and repent... he refused to obey! ... He wanted salvation on his own terms... not God's... so he turned and went away in great sorrow.

The young man thought that eternal life came to those who "did something" to earn it... which was a typical Jewish conviction... But when Jesus gave him something to do... he refused to obey! ... He was looking to enter the Kingdom of God salvation on the terms that he had already accepted. ... he was not willing to accept any different conditions than his own.

Jesus dropped quite a bombshell when He announced that it was difficult for rich people to be saved. ... This must have come as quite a shock...

even to Christ's disciples. ... Jews believed that riches were the sure sign of God's approval. ... They must have been thinking... "*If rich people can't be saved... what hope is there for the rest of us?*"

Luke 18:26

Jesus was not declaring that possessing riches keeps people out of heaven. (Abraham...David... and Solomon were very wealthy men... And that is just to name a few Biblical saints!) It is *being possessed* by riches and *trusting* them that makes salvation difficult for the wealthy. ... Lets be clear... Jesus is not saying that it is wrong to be rich. ... What He **is** saying is that for some men... and especially this rich man... riches become their idol. ... *Wealth can be a handicap!* ... We think the rich to be overprivileged. ... Jesus said they were underprivileged.

(This rich young ruler had become a lover of money instead of God.)... Wealth often gives people a false sense of success and security... and when people are satisfied with themselves... they feel no need for God. ... How easy it is for an earnest man or woman to become so attached to material riches... that he or she forgets what is infinitely more important. Wealth can pervert one's values.

But the bottom line is... it is no more possible for a man to get into Heaven by using his riches... than it is for a camel to go through the eye of a common sewing needle. It can't be done!

Luke 18:27

Men cannot enter on their own terms... whatever terms those may be. It is impossible. The rich young ruler is a warning to anyone... who wants a Christian faith... that does not change their values or upset their lifestyle. The only possible means for salvation is under God's terms...

What are those terms...? In order to enter the Kingdom of God...

I. We must have a child-like heart.

II. We must recognize that Jesus is God.

III. We must admit our sin and accept God's terms. ...and

IV. We must place our faith in Jesus, the risen Son of God, Who has a certain future reward for us.

Luke 18:28-34

Peter was reminding the Lord of the great sacrifice that he and all the other disciples had made to follow Him. ... Jesus immediately seized on that statement... and reminded His men of the certain reward that they had yet to realize... but was most definite. ... And then Christ spoke of the sacrifice **He** was about to endure... in order to make their eternal reward possible. But such reward would only come to those who placed their faith in what His costly sacrifice was about to accomplish.

This did not click with any of His disciples at first... It was hidden from them... verse 34 says. ... But shortly after the resurrection of Jesus... the apostle Peter was arrested for healing a crippled man in the temple area. Peter and John were brought before the Supreme Court of Israel. ...There

they were asked, "By what power or in what name, have you done this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them. "...let it be known to you and all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead-by this name this man stands here before you in good health...and there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

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This morning our passage has had us look at the basics of the Gospel. Do you have a firm enough grasp on these truths... that you could share it with another person.

Perhaps an even better question for some who are here this morning would be... have you entered the Kingdom of God... yourself...?

To do that you must...

I. have a child-like heart.

II. recognize that Jesus is God.

III. admit your sin and accept God's terms. ...and

IV. place your faith in Jesus, the risen Son of God, Who has a certain future reward for you.

The gospel is not good instructions... not a good idea... and not good advice. ... The gospel is an announcement of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.