

BUILD MODULE ONE

UNIT 6 EXCERPT THE '3-2-1' APPROACH TO EXPLAINING THE GOOD NEWS

A message to communicate (section 6.3.2 of Unit 6 of Module One)

The gospel is a message of good news. It is a powerful and life changing message. Paul calls it “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). We need to be able to communicate it clearly and simply.

Communicating the good news to others

We will begin by assessing the way in which we are already communicating the gospel to other people. In order to evaluate the message you are sharing and how you are explaining it, we will follow a similar process to the one we used to help us share our testimonies. Follow the four steps below:

Step 1. Person A: spend 5 minutes explaining the gospel, as you understand it, to Person B.

Step 2. Person B: comment on the explanation of the gospel that you have just heard. For example, what was clear about it and what was not?

Step 3. Reverse the process. Person B: spend 5 minutes explaining the gospel to Person A.

Step 4. Person A: comment on the explanation of the gospel that you have just heard. For example, what was clear about it and what was not?

You might want to comment on your explanations in the light of the passages we have already looked at in the Pastoral Epistles.

Communicating the gospel using the '3-2-1' approach

There are lots of different ways to explain the good news. BUILD's '3-2-1' outline has been designed for use with the BUILD materials and is based on 1 Timothy 1:15-17. We read that passage as part of Paul's testimony in 1 Timothy 1:12-17. And we also studied it in Unit 5. The passage is short, so take time to learn it off by heart, one verse at a time. It has been divided up below to help you to do that:

¹⁵ Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst.

¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners,

Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We are calling this approach '3-2-1' so that we know what we are referring to and to make this presentation of the gospel easy to remember.

It is called '3-2-1' because in 1 Timothy 1:15-17 there are:

Three things to understand,

Two things to do, and

One thing to celebrate!

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THREE THINGS TO UNDERSTAND

God is King

Verse 17 tells us about “the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God”. God is King. He is in charge of everything and everyone. He always has been and always will be because he is “eternal”. God is not like us, he is “immortal” and “invisible”. There is no-one like him, he is “the only God”. We have been created to “honour” him and to give him “glory”, which means to recognise who he is and to live to please him.

Do you understand that God is King and that you should obey him?

We are sinners

In verses 15 and 16 Paul calls people “sinners” and he feels as though he is the “worst of sinners”. No one likes to be called a sinner, but Paul tells us elsewhere that God loves us very much. But we do not love him in return, we ignore him and live our lives as though he did not exist. That means we are “sinners”. God will not tolerate our sin, and separation from him is death. This is a problem that God alone can solve.

Do you understand that you are a sinner and are cut off from God?

Jesus came to save us

This good news is at the heart of the “trustworthy saying” in verse 15: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”. If we understand the situation we are in we know that we need a saviour. The title “Christ Jesus” means God’s chosen rescuer. God the King came in the person of his Son; his death and resurrection completed his mission. At the cross Jesus dealt with evil once and for all. He is the saviour we need.

Do you understand that Christ Jesus is the only one who can rescue you?

TWO THINGS TO DO

Believe in Jesus

Verse 16 reminds us that God has done all the work but that we must respond: we must “believe in him”. That is Paul’s way of telling us to trust what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, after all the gospel is “a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance”. We must put our hope in Jesus, the only one who can rescue us.

Will you put your trust in Jesus to save you?

Live for Jesus

Believing in Jesus is just the beginning. We must live our lives for Jesus. The passage ends with these words: “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Paul learnt to honour and glorify God. We must do the same. That means putting him first and living for him.

Will you live God’s way from now on?

ONE THING TO CELEBRATE!

God’s gift of life

Verse 16 tells us that if we trust in God we will “receive eternal life”, the life of the world to come. The King welcomes us into his kingdom, a kingdom that has no evil and no end. That life begins now through the gift of God’s Holy Spirit to those who trust in him and live for him. But it continues beyond the grave and into the future, when God’s rule over a new heaven and a new earth will be established forever.

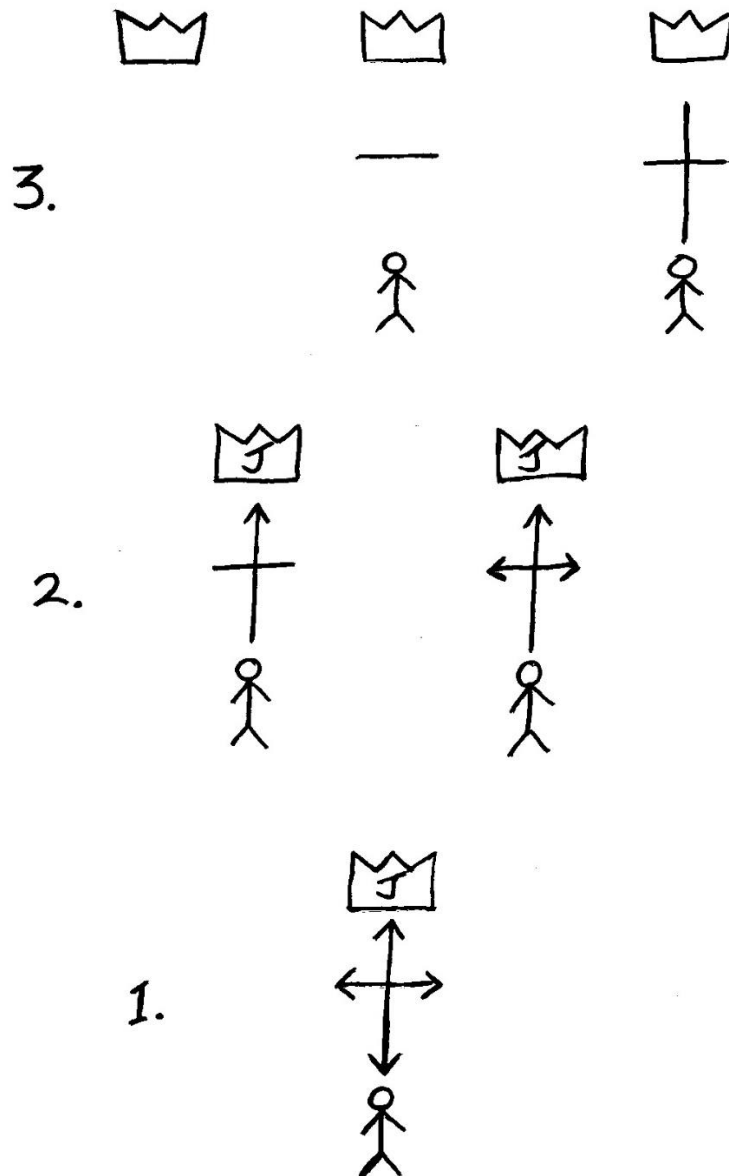
What makes God’s gift of a new start such good news for you?

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Picturing "The Gospel 3-2-1"

You can use some very simple pictures to illustrate and explain the outline, like the pictures below. You can either draw these as six separate ones, or build it up as just one picture as you go along:



In the first row of pictures ('three things to understand'):

- The first picture is of a crown to show that God is King.
- The second shows us under God's rule, but as sinners, separate from him.
- The third points out that Jesus is our saviour. He died for the sins of the world.

In the second row ('two things to do'):

- The arrow in the first picture points up to tell us that we must believe in Jesus.
- The second has arrows pointing outwards: we must live our lives for Jesus.

In the third row ('one thing to celebrate'):

- The picture has an arrow pointing down: God gives us his life.

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Here are some other ideas for using the outline above to explain the gospel:

1. Ask the person you are talking with for permission to share a brief explanation of the good news from the Bible for you to discuss together. Many people have rejected a false presentation of the gospel and have never considered a true one.

2. Read out the passage at the beginning and keep referring to it. That will help people to see that you are not inventing a message and that your authority comes from the Bible.

3. Go through the presentation by making the statements, providing the explanations and asking the questions. Build out the statements with further explanation. You do not have to follow the text of "The Gospel 3-2-1" exactly, share what is essential and adapt it for your setting using your own language. Use what you learnt in Unit 5.

4. Don't stop when you get to the end of the 'two things to do'. Go on to explain 'one thing to celebrate', the wonderful gift of life from God. But then make sure people understand that there is a commitment to make.

5. You can then repeat the presentation with the simple pictures. You do not have to introduce the pictures at the beginning or use them at all. They can provide a way of reinforcing the message if you want to use them.

6. You can use other parts of 1 Timothy to shed more light on it all. For example 6:15-16 reinforces and develops the main idea of 1:17: God is King. It uses a number of phrases to do so. For example, "King of kings and Lord of lords" has Old Testament background that emphasises God's absolute sovereignty (Ezekiel 26:7 and Daniel 2:37) as well as his power over all other 'gods' (Deuteronomy 10:17 and Psalm 136:2-3). The fact that he dwells in "unapproachable light" (Psalm 104:2) reminds us of his holiness and blinding purity.

3:16 explains more about Jesus' saving mission: his becoming flesh, his global recognition and his glorious ascension.

2:5-6 tells us more about Jesus' role as our mediator and ransom through his death.

6:14 explains that Jesus will appear again: no one will escape his claim on their lives.

Finally 4:10 uses the idea of putting "our hope in the living God" as another way of describing belief and it indicates that we do that by placing our trust in him as Jesus, "the Saviour of all people". It also helps us to understand that while God can save everyone and anyone, he only saves "those who believe".

7. People need to not only understand the gospel but to also respond to it. Repentance and faith is the response God requires: turning away from rebellion and relying on him and living his way. The 'two things to do' underlines that fact.

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Using 3-2-1 to not only explain the gospel but to lead someone to Christ

Following on from the above, 3-2-1 explains the content of gospel. It leads naturally to challenging people to follow Jesus for themselves. You can help someone to begin to follow Jesus by turning the content in the outline into a prayer like this one:

Heavenly Father, I recognise that you are King. I have been living in your world but I have not been living your way. Thank you for sending Jesus to be my saviour. I trust in him alone for my salvation and I want to live for him until I meet with him face to face. Thank you for the gift of life, which your Holy Spirit brings, help me to live your way from now on with the help of that same Spirit. Amen.

You can adjust the content of the prayer for the situation of the listener or group.

A final note

Any short explanation of the gospel will have its strengths and weaknesses. You can make up for any shortcomings that you think this presentation has. Remember that even Jesus and Paul explained the same gospel differently in different settings. You need to tailor your explanation to your setting. For example, you can explain that the single figure of the individual can also represent mankind as a whole; we were made for relationship with one another. Each of us, alone, must decide, but the good news has an impact on all our relationships and leads to a new community, the local church.