

*Who's your favorite? Batman, Spiderman, or Superman?

People changed by the Gospel of Jesus are sort of like Spiderman:

- *we were ordinary men and women **1 Corinthians 1:26-31**
- *the Gospel of Jesus transformed us into something new **2 Corinthians 5:17**
- *we are filled with new power, the Holy Spirit **John 14:26, Ephesians 1:13-14**
- *the Holy Spirit enables us to deliver a powerful message that saves **1 Corinthians 2**

We're talking about the Gospel all morning, so let's frame it with The Big Idea:

The Gospel does the Work! **Romans 1:16** 'dunamis' = power i.e. dynamite

Before we go further, let's look at the implications of this:

- *We DON'T do the work.
- *We might be God's messengers, but salvation doesn't hinge on us.
- *It is the truth of the Gospel, NOT the effectiveness of the messenger, that saves souls.
- *We are imperfect messengers with a perfect message.
- *We don't draw men to God, God draws men to Himself. **John 6:44**
- *The Big Idea means we can exhale! **Whether or not someone is saved is not up to us, nor is it accomplished by us, so the one who rejects the Gospel is not rejecting us.**

1.) **The truth of the Gospel is universal** // **Acts 17:16-17**

- The Holy Spirit *provoked* Paul 'paroxuno' = "to sharpen; to stimulate"
 - We're bad about giving the Spirit's credit to ourselves and/or our conscious
 - The Spirit puts words in our mouth **Mark 13:11, John 16:13**
 - The Spirit guided Paul's words and actions in Acts 17 - Paul was simply obedient
- **"SO** he was *reasoning...*" 'dialogomai' = "dialogue; conversation"
- Paul shared the Gospel with...
 - *Jews *God-fearing Gentiles *Greek Philosophers
 - ***and "those who happened to be present" (in the market place) **vs. 17**
- Paul didn't save the Gospel for well established relationships
- **The Gospel is for your best friend, the market place, and everyone in between.**
- **The Gospel is for everyone and powerful enough to change anyone at any time.**
 - Saul (Paul) is the only example you need of this! **Acts 9**
- We've become a culture of "relational evangelism" alone
- *"Preach the word at all times and when necessary use words."* ~St. Francis of Assisi
- No evidence he ever said or lived like this:
 - <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/07/11/factchecker-misquoting-francis-of-assisi/>
- So when our method of evangelism is crafting the perfect scenario, we're saying:
 - "I do the work and the power of my convincing saves souls."
 - "The Gospel isn't relevant to your life until I'm relevant in your life."
 - "The Gospel isn't quite powerful enough to transform her life just yet."
 - "I'm the key to his soul, and when I'm ready I'll get the job done."
 - "I've got more confidence in me than Jesus."
 - "No man comes to the Father but by (insert your name here)."

*This is us idolizing ourselves, worshipping our preparedness, and fearing man.

"God did not give us a Spirit of fear, but of power." -2 Timothy 1:7

- Jesus' final instructions to us were to share the Good News and that He would give us the power (Holy Spirit) to do so. **Matthew 28:18-19, Acts 1:8**
- It's Good News, not Good Demonstration. We have to verbalize it!

"It's simply impossible to preach the Gospel without words.

The Gospel is inherently verbal and preaching the Gospel is inherently verbal behavior."

~Duane Liftin, Wheaton College President

- Imagine if you never verbalized your love for your spouse or kids.
- We don't have to build the perfect scenario, we just have to tell the truth, because **The Gospel does the Work!**

2.) **The presentation of the Gospel is contextual** // Acts 17:18-29

- Paul is sharing the Gospel of Jesus with 2 completely different camps:
 - Jews-super religious, tons of convictions, well versed in OT, highly churchied
 - Greeks-pantheists and polytheists (some OT God-fearing)
 - Athens was home to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Alexander the Great
 - Cultural and Philosophical hub of the world
- Paul is sharing Jesus in the Market Place (Facebook in the flesh or Concord Mills Blvd)
- Sharing Jesus intrigued people. Paul was taken to the Areopagus
 - Areopagus-Athenian court of Philosophical Judges (think Dept. of Thinking...)
 - Decided the validity of new thoughts and theories
 - Socrates had to defend his teachings in front of the Areopagus
 - Met on "Mars Hill," a small hill just out of town dedicated to Mars (Ares) god of war
- How did Paul contextualize the Gospel?
 - Jews-always connected on common belief of the OT and showed Jesus was the fulfillment of all the Biblical prophecies of the Messiah
 - Greeks-less common ground, so Paul worked from their culture to the Scriptures
 - Both "Spiritual" people
 - Estimated 30,000 public statues to gods in Athens
 - Remember about these the Holy Spirit prompted Paul*
 - Why were the statues there? (Epimenides, sheep, and plagues)
 - This was their spiritual door that Paul walked through
 - "You've left room for an "Unknown God" and I know who He is
 - He also refers to their pop culture (poets):
 - "In him we live and move and have our being." -Epimenides (sheep guy)
 - "We are his children." -Aratus, also a Greek poet, also about Zeus
 - Like turning some semi-spiritual Katie Perry song into a spiritual conversation
- Paul meets the Greeks where they are, and turns what they know into Jesus.
 - How can you do this in the workplace? around family? in the market place?
 - How can you better know and be a part of the cultures around you?
 - How can you relate your daily circumstances to Jesus?
 - How can you start spiritual conversations?

- Some basic questions to start Gospel conversations:
 - Can I pray for you?
 - Do you ever think about Spiritual things?
 - What's your opinion about Jesus? About Christianity?
 - What do you think God is like?
 - Do you ever feel like there is something more in life?
 - Has anybody ever genuinely told you about Jesus' love for you?
 - What do you think happens to your soul after you die?

*Meet the culture where the culture is at and turn things to Jesus.

“The mission of Christians is not to make the Gospel relevant, it's to show the relevance of the Gospel.” ~Mark Driscoll

3.) **The message of the Gospel is confrontational** // Acts 17:30-31

- Look back at what Paul confronted them with
 - God of the Bible the ONLY God
 - God of the Bible created everything
 - He isn't dependent on man and doesn't need his houses
 - He's a personal, loving, saving God
 - They are ignorant of the true God, Jesus and need to repent and worship Him
- This ties in a lot with point one about intentionally verbalizing the Gospel.
 - The Gospel IS confrontational and offensive. **1 Corinthians 1:18**
 - **Jesus tells us no man comes to the Father but by Him (John 14:6)**
 - **The real Jesus is offensive and we have to stop apologizing for Him.**
 - This is why we prefer to live the Gospel and build long relationships before we are comfortable enough to verbalize the Gospel because we love the person and don't want to hurt him or her with a controversial message.
 - I believe God is telling us today you don't really love that person if you won't go ahead and tell them the truth.
 - Sooner or later, you have to tell an unbeliever they are sinful like you, and there are eternal consequences for that, but Jesus came with a solution. **John 3:16-21**

4.) **The reception of the Gospel is variable** // Acts 17:32-34

- Mark Driscoll: The response ranges from curiosity, to contempt, to conversion.
- MANY will ridicule the Gospel (and maybe even you)
- MORE will walk away indifferent from the Gospel
- SOME will repent and be transformed by the Gospel
- **You can't dictate the response to Jesus. You can only be faithful to share His message.**

*You'll never get a response to a Gospel you don't share.

“Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. How will they call on Him if they don't believe in Him? How will they believe in Him if they haven't heard about Him? How will they hear about Him unless you tell them?” -Romans 10:13-15

Homework for the Christian: Write out the message of Jesus and pray about who to share it this week and how.

Homework for the non-Christian: Make your decision about Jesus and share it with us.