



5-Day Devotional: Knowing the True Gospel

Day 1: Look Beneath the Surface

Key Verse:

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.” — Matthew 7:15

Reflection:

Two pieces of chocolate can look exactly the same, yet taste completely different. The same can be true of churches and teaching about God. On the surface, many things may appear similar—songs, sermons, prayers, or even Bible verses. But what truly matters is the substance beneath the surface.

Jesus warned that false teachers would appear among His people. They may look faithful and speak religious language, yet distort the message of salvation. Some add requirements to the gospel. Others remove the seriousness of sin. Still others replace Christ with self-help, prosperity, or personal fulfillment.

The heart of the matter is simple: What do we do with Jesus? The true gospel proclaims that sinners are saved by God’s grace through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ alone. When that message is altered—even slightly—the gospel itself is changed.

God’s Word invites us to listen carefully, test what we hear, and hold fast to the truth that gives life.

Prayer:

Lord, keep me rooted in Your Word. Give me discernment so I recognize truth and reject anything that distorts the gospel of Jesus. Amen.

Day 2: Love That Transforms

Key Verse:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” — 2 Corinthians 5:17

Reflection:

Many people like the phrase “God is love.” And it is true. But God’s love is not passive or indifferent. His love transforms.

When we belong to Christ, God does not simply leave us as we are. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, He begins changing our hearts, our desires, and our lives. Scripture calls this transformation sanctification—the ongoing work of God shaping His people into the image of Christ.

Because of our sinful nature, we often grow comfortable with sins we know are wrong. We excuse them, ignore them, or assume they are simply part of who we are. But God’s love refuses to leave us trapped in what harms us. He calls us to repentance and leads us into new life.

God’s commands are not burdens meant to crush us. They are the loving guidance of a Father who knows what is good for His children.

The question we face daily is this: Do we trust that God’s ways are better than our own?

Prayer:

Father, thank You for loving me enough to change me. By Your Spirit, lead me away from sin and shape my life according to Your will. Amen.

Day 3: Love That Upholds Justice

Key Verse:

“The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.” —
Psalm 33:5

Reflection:

Love and justice belong together. A world without justice would not be loving at all. If evil went unchecked and wrongdoing never mattered, suffering would only increase.

Scripture reveals that God is both loving and just. He created the world with order and goodness, yet sin has broken that design. Because God is righteous, He does not ignore evil. He judges it.

This truth can be difficult to accept. The story of the flood in Noah’s time reminds us that sin has real consequences. Humanity rejected God, and judgment followed. God’s justice shows that He takes sin seriously.

Yet this reality also points us to something deeper. If God were only just, none of us could stand before Him. Scripture says the wages of sin is death. Every person has fallen short.

But the justice of God prepares us to understand the greatness of His mercy. God does not delight in judgment. Instead, He provides a way of rescue.

And that way is Christ.

Prayer:

Holy God, help me take sin seriously and trust in Your perfect justice. Lead me to find refuge in Your mercy. Amen.

Day 4: Love That Saves

Key Verse:

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” — John 14:6

Reflection:

In a world filled with many spiritual ideas, people often assume that every path leads to God. Yet Jesus spoke clearly: He is the way.

This claim may seem narrow, but it is actually good news. Humanity rejected God and deserved separation from Him. Yet God did not abandon us. Out of love, He sent His Son to rescue sinners.

Jesus lived the life we could not live and died the death we deserved. On the cross, He carried the judgment for sin. Through His resurrection, He opened the way to eternal life.

Salvation is not earned by good works, generosity, or personal effort. It is a gift of grace received through faith in Christ. Because of Jesus, forgiveness is real, hope is certain, and heaven is open.

The exclusivity of Jesus is not meant to exclude people—it is meant to reveal the one true Savior God has given for the whole world.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You for being the way to the Father. Help me trust fully in Your saving work and rest in Your grace. Amen.

Day 5: Living and Sharing the True Gospel

Key Verse:

“God our Savior... desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” —
1 Timothy 2:3–4

Reflection:

God’s love is not only something we believe—it is something we share.

All around us are people who misunderstand God. Some believe He approves of everything they do. Others assume He is distant or harsh. Still others think salvation depends on their own goodness.

Because of this confusion, the true gospel is desperately needed. God loves the world, calls sinners to repentance, and offers salvation through Jesus Christ. This message changes lives.

God has placed people in your life—family members, friends, coworkers, neighbors—who need to hear that good news. Often the first step is simply prayer. Ask God to open hearts and create opportunities for conversation.

As we approach times when people may be more open to spiritual conversations, remember that sharing the gospel is not about winning arguments. It is about pointing people to the Savior who loves them.

The same grace that saved you is the grace God desires for all.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, place people on my heart who need to hear the gospel. Give me courage, wisdom, and love as I share the hope found in Jesus. Amen.

Small Group Discussion

Opening Icebreaker

Question:

Have you ever tasted or experienced something that looked good on the outside but turned out to be very different once you experienced it?

(Example: two chocolates that look identical but taste completely different.)

Sometimes things that appear the same on the surface can actually be very different in substance. The same can be true with churches, teachings, and even messages about God.

Key Idea

In a city with hundreds or even thousands of churches, many may look similar on the outside. But the real question is: **What do they teach about the gospel?**

Scripture warns that not every message about God is the true gospel. Some teachings distort it by **adding to Christ, subtracting from Christ, or replacing Christ altogether.**

Matthew 7:15

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”

Galatians 1:6–7

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him... and are turning to a different gospel.”

Common False Gospels in Scripture

1. Adding to Christ (Legalism)

Teaching that Jesus saves **plus** something else—good works, spiritual achievements, or religious performance.

Ephesians 2:8–9

“For by grace you have been saved through faith... not a result of works.”

2. Subtracting from Christ

Denying who Jesus is or what He has done.

1 John 4:2–3

“Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”

3. Replacing Christ

Replacing the gospel with prosperity, self-improvement, or permission to live however we want.

1 Timothy 6:9–10

A warning against those who treat faith as a way to gain wealth.

Jude 4

A warning against those who turn God’s grace into an excuse for sin.

The Half-Truth: “God Is Love”

The Bible does say this.

1 John 4:8

“God is love.”

But when this truth is separated from the rest of Scripture, it can be distorted to mean:

- God approves of everything we do
- God never judges sin
- God simply exists to affirm us

The Bible shows us a fuller picture.

What God's Love Actually Means

1. God's Love Transforms Us

God's love does not leave us as we are—it changes us.

2 Corinthians 5:17

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”

2 Timothy 3:16

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.”

God's love calls us to repentance and growth.

2. God's Love Is Just

God cares about justice and righteousness.

Psalms 33:5

“He loves righteousness and justice.”

Sin has consequences.

Romans 6:23

“The wages of sin is death.”

God is not indifferent to evil; His justice makes things right.

3. God's Love Saves

Because God loves the world, He provided a way for salvation through Jesus.

John 14:6

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

1 Timothy 2:4

God “desires all people to be saved.”

Salvation is not earned—it is received by grace through faith in Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think false gospels are often built around partial truths rather than obvious lies?
 2. Which of the three distortions (adding to Christ, subtracting from Christ, replacing Christ) do you see most often today?
 3. How does understanding God's justice help us better understand His love?
 4. What does it mean personally that God's love transforms us rather than simply affirms us?
 5. Who is someone in your life who might need to hear the true gospel?
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Application

This week:

- Ask God to help you recognize when the gospel is being misrepresented.
 - Reflect on areas where God may be transforming your life.
 - Pray for someone in your life who needs to hear the true message of Christ.
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Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for revealing Yourself to us through Your Word. We thank You that You are a God of love—a love that transforms us, brings justice, and saves us through Your Son. Guard our hearts from believing distorted versions of the gospel, and help us hold firmly to the truth that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus. Give us wisdom to recognize false teachings and courage to share the true gospel with others. We pray that Your Spirit would work through us to point people to Christ.

In Jesus' name, Amen.