

[CITY GROUPS X]

GOSPEL FLUENCY

WE CAN'T TRULY VALUE OUR FREEDOM UNTIL WE UNDERSTAND THE
DEPTHS OF OUR SLAVERY.

JESUS,
AND EVERYTHING HE DOES AND CAUSES,
IS GOOD NEWS.

#FREETOBE MASTERED
#GOSPELFLUENCY

Fish out of water

Do you think a fish knows it's in water? Obviously I haven't had any revealing conversations with fish, so I don't know for sure. But I would guess that a fish is pretty unaware of what water is. The fish doesn't notice the water because that is just the environment it's used to.

However, if you take a fish out of water, it certainly knows that something is wrong! When removed from the water, a fish gasps for its natural environment. It flails and kicks its tail, attempting to do whatever it needs to put itself back where it intrinsically knows it belongs. For a fish, being in the water means life, and being out of the water means death.

What if followers of Jesus were so used to living in the light of gospel truth that when we encounter the world broken by sin, we gasped and kicked and flailed and decided to do whatever was necessary to bring the world back under the redeeming truth of the gospel?

John, the close friend and follower of Jesus, had a lot to say about "life." In fact, his book -which is only 21 chapters long- references life over 40 times! The truth is that like fish in water, we are built for life in Jesus.

*In him [Jesus] was **life**, and the **life** was the light of men. (John 1:4)*

*Jesus Said," For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal **life**." (John 3:16)*

*Jesus said, "I came that they may have **life** and have it abundantly." (John 10:10)*

*Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the **life**." (John 14:6)*

And like a fish out of water, we cannot truly survive outside of life in Jesus:

"whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life." (John 3:36)

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." (John 6:35)

Unfortunately, many followers of Jesus today are unaware that all of life should be affected and infected by the truths of the gospel of Jesus. We live day to day, acting like the only time that the gospel matters is Sunday mornings and, if we're really holy, Wednesday evenings.

And while it may seem like a cultural phenomenon which has only recently come into the world, really it is a problem that has plagued God's people from the first time sin entered the world.

the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (gen 2:16-17)

God gave Adam the whole garden and basically said, "You can eat the fruit of that tree, and that tree, and that one, and this one, and that tree, and those trees, and these trees. You can eat the fruit of this one, and this

one, and this one. And that one over there, you can eat from that one too, and also this one over here! But, Adam, there is this one tree that will bring you harm if you eat it. I don't want you to be hurt, so please don't eat from that one. But all the others: eat, eat, eat!

Surely Adam was hungry, so hearing God say something like this would definitely be good news to Adam! But just one chapter later, this happens:

the serpent said to eve, "Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?" And eve said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. "" But the serpent said to Eve, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Gen 3:1-5)

The serpent basically says to Eve, "You can't trust God in this. What he said doesn't apply to you right here, right now." Eve, believing the serpent instead of believing God, responded this way:

So when Eve saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to Adam, her husband, who was with her, and he ate. (Gen 3:6)

God had given his people (Adam and Eve) good news. He said, "You can eat all of this!" But when they disregarded the good news that God had given, even just in a seemingly-small area of their life like eating, sin entered the world and the perfect relationship between God and humanity was broken. That first sin opened the door for all the suffering and hardship we face in the world today. War, cancer, divorce, fatherless children, disease...it all happened because the first man and woman decided not to apply the good news of God to the normal, everyday things of life.

But what if things could be different? What if followers of Jesus could learn to apply the good news of Jesus to the normal, everyday things of life?

What does it mean to be fluent in a foreign language?

Travelling abroad, I once heard a joke that I thought was pretty funny:

Q. What do you call someone who speaks three languages?

A. Trilingual.

Q. What do you call someone who speaks two languages?

A. Bilingual.

Q. What do you call someone who speaks one language?

A. American.

While some Americans may not love that joke, I personally found it to be pretty funny. It's also pretty true! Though many Americans can speak more than one language because they took a few semesters of it high school or college, children from other countries often grow up speaking multiple languages in their homes!

Take my Indian friend Akash for example: He is an Indian who can speak Hindi, English, Punjabi, Kannada, a little Telegu, and Bengali. (Those are just the ones I know about...he probably also speaks a little Marathi, Gujarati, Malayalam, and Tamil) The crazy thing is, he didn't take any foreign language classes to learn them...he just grew up speaking them in his home! Those languages all come pretty naturally to Akash because they have been a normal part of his everyday life since he was born. He's not crazy-educated or necessarily any smarter than average; he's just a product of his environment.

So what does it mean to be fluent in a foreign language? A combination of a few dictionaries and my own experiences have led me to the following definition:

Fluency is the ability to accurately hear and respond in a specific language.

Akash can fluently speak multiple languages, not because he's taken enough classes or heard enough lectures on the language, but because he has spent so much time in an environment soaked in and driven by the language. So what would happen if followers of Jesus spent so much time in an environment soaked in and driven by the good news of Jesus?

This is what it means to be Gospel Fluent: to be so immersed in a gospel-saturated culture, that speaking and living a gospel-saturated life is as natural and easy to us as speaking multiple languages is to Akash.

Gospel Fluency is when a person knows the good news of Jesus and is able to accurately apply it to normal, everyday life.

By this definition, if we are going to become people who are fluent in the gospel, we need to answer the following two questions:

1. What is the Gospel?
2. How do we apply the gospel to normal, everyday life?

What is the gospel?

Did you grow up going to a church or in an at least somewhat religious family? If you did, chances are that this word "gospel" isn't new to you. However, the chances are also good that it is a word you've heard a lot, but never really looked into very much. And even if that's not the way you grew up, if you've grown up in the West or have heard of "the gospel" at all, you'll probably be able to identify with the following section.

When asked, "What is the gospel?," most followers of Jesus might give an answer that looks something like this picture to the right.

In summary:

- Man sinned and was separated from God.
- Jesus came and died to pay the penalty for sins.
- When we die, we get to go to heaven and not hell.

While these things are all good and true, saying that this a complete summary of the gospel would be like saying that The Lord of The Rings is about a piece of jewellery, or saying that in order to drive a car you must be able to see, or saying that salt makes a meal great. Those statements are all true, but they are far from being complete.

The Lord of the Rings has hundreds of characters, good, evil, triumph, and loss. It's a story of friendship and bravery, and self-sacrifice in the face of overwhelming odds. The Dark Lord Sauron creates a mighty ring that gives him power to control the world. But the ring falls into the hands of the hobbit Frodo. The Lord of the Rings is the story of Frodo and his friends traveling over land and sea, mountains and caves, and forests and rivers to destroy the ring and bring peace to Middle Earth.

While being able to see is a critical part of being able to drive a car, so are things like having hands and feet, a driver's license, a running car, and gas in the tank!

A tender, juicy steak can be put over the top by the right amount of salt, but if you try to salt a soggy piece of cardboard, you will never get a great meal!

True statements, but not complete. Get the picture? The summary of "the gospel" above is true, but it's not complete.

Paul writes to the Ephesians, and his desire is for their maturity in faith. He urges them to grow...

...to maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Eph 4:13-14)

He wants them to be built up in the "fullness of Christ," so immersed in the good news of Jesus in their normal, everyday lives, that they won't fall away from the truths of the gospel, like we saw earlier with Adam and Eve.

Matthew 4:23 says:

Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Isn't it interesting (and potentially mind-blowing) that Jesus is "proclaiming the gospel" long before he is ever crucified, resurrected, or ascended to heaven? If the gospel is only that Christ died for sins so we can go to heaven, then this passage in Matthew makes no sense at all! For Jesus, the gospel was more than that, and it seems to have been effective in the everyday lives of normal people!

God desires that our everyday, normal lives would be deeply affected by the truths of the gospel . But this can only happen if we start to understand that the gospel is more than Sin-Jesus-Heaven.

The Good News

The word “gospel” has become quite limited in its usage, and is primarily understood today as a “christian” word. But this has not always been the case. In fact, many words that we would think of as “christian” words were, at one time, just normal words. Words like baptism (to put in water), the greek word Ecclesia which we translate church (a gathering of people), and the word fellowship (a group of people meeting together to pursue a shared interest) are just a few examples.

For now, let’s look more deeply at the word “gospel.” Where does it come from, and what has the word itself meant throughout time?

In scripture, the word translated as “gospel” is the greek word “evangelion” (sometimes also translated as “euaggelion”). It is made up of three distinct parts:

1. Ev (or Eu), meaning “good”
2. Angel, meaning “messenger”
3. and Ion, which is indicative of what is possessed by the aforementioned messenger, i.e. the message

So the word “gospel” is translated from a word that means “a good message.” This word has nothing inherent in it related to Jesus or any particular religion. It literally means “a good message.”

This means it could be used in a wide variety of ways. The Friday night gospel may be the good news that “the hometown football team won their homecoming game!” The doctor’s gospel may be the good news that “mother and baby are doing fine.” The hard-working husband’s gospel could be the good news of, “I got a promotion!”

As the word became associated with Jesus, and faith in Jesus crossed time and culture, the word evangelion would eventually be translated from its original Greek to the Old English word “Gōdspel,” which has two parts:

1. Gōd (pronounced Goad), meaning “good”
2. Spel (from which we get our english word “spelling”), meaning “word”

So directly translated, gōdspel means “good word.” It is easy then to see that the Old English word gōdspel eventually became the modern English word “gospel,” which simply means “a good message” or “good news.”

Therefore, the Gospel of Jesus is just “the good news of Jesus.” While this is incredibly simple, it is also much, much broader than the Sin-Jesus-Heaven gospel. The good news of Jesus is wide-ranging and all-encompassing.

At one point, I decided to read through books of the new testament and highlight things that the original audience would have considered to be “good news” caused by Jesus. It didn’t take me long to realize that this exercise would mean pretty much highlighting entire paragraphs and chapters of books. And the same is true of the old testament! The Bible is mostly comprised of God’s good news for broken people!

And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. (Gen 1:29)

Good news.

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, ...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen 12:1-3)

Good news.

Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt ...I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 3:7-8)

Good news.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:6,12)

Good news.

But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts. (Mal 4:2-3)

Good news.

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32)

Good news.

We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ...because by works of the law no one will be justified. (Gal 2:16)

Good news.

Jesus, and everything he does and causes, is good news. Jesus himself tells us this as he reads from the book of Isaiah while teaching in a synagogue:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:18-21)

Jesus says that his purpose is to proclaim good news! He says he came to set captives free, to heal the blind, free people from oppression, and to show people that God cares for them deeply!

Jesus sets captives free.

The song, "This is Amazing Grace" begins with the lines:

**Who breaks the power
of sin and darkness?**

**Who's love is mighty
and so much stronger?**

**The King of Glory,
The King above all kings.**

Sin and darkness have a lot of power in the world. People are captive to so many things, including -but not limited to- money, sex, power, approval, success, possessions, status, achievement, entertainment, drugs, alcohol, responsibility, excitement, safety, security, comfort, religion, and food.

We can look at the creation story in Genesis and see that we were created with a God-given purpose to reflect the character and image of God, and to fill the earth with that image. We were created to be in a relationship with God, and to submit to him as our only master. In Matthew 6:24, Jesus further tells us,

"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Jesus used the idol of money more than any other example because he knew that money would be among the most tempting things for us to bow down and serve instead of him. He tells us right here that we can't be divided; it just doesn't work. The Designer of our hearts knows that our hearts are designed to only serve one thing at a time. The Old Testament often chides the Israelites when they forget about their God and begin to worship other gods. The New Testament shows us more examples of Jesus calling men and women to leave behind their idols and to follow him instead.

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (Luke 18:22)

And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him. (Mark 1:20)

And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. (Mark 2:14)

And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:16-17)

Jesus calls people away from the things in their lives that they have given authority to that only belongs to God. Again, the Creator knows what is best for his creation: to be mastered by him and his mission. Nothing else is as good as this, and he desires it deeply for his people.

Jesus came to set us free from our idols and our addictions. We will never have enough money to be satisfying. But even the smallest glimpse of Jesus is fully satisfying. We will never be able to gain the approval of every person, but in Jesus, God - the Creator of all people- fully approves of you!

God said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matt 3:17)

If you are in Jesus, God loves you and is well pleased with you! That's definitely good news!!

We can never drink enough alcohol to drown out the pain of loneliness and failure. But Jesus is a friend that **sticks closer than a brother** (Pr. 18:14), and he promises that he will **never leave us or forsake us** (Hebrews 13:5)! He says that he will **heal every wound** and **wipe away every tear** (Rev 21:4)!

And without going into too much detail, married couples, deeply rooted in a right relationship with Jesus can have the best, most fulfilling sex, since they can live out their original design to be **naked and unashamed** (Gen 2:25).

Are there things in your life that control you? Jesus can set you free from your captivity.

Jesus heals the blind.

The gospels hold seemingly endless stories of Jesus healing people: blindness, leprosy, dropsy, deafness, muteness, lameness, fever, and even death!

In the beginning, the world was created without suffering, pain, disease, or death. But when sin entered the world, death and all of its associates came close behind. But in the end, Jesus will set all things right.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." (Rev 21:4-5)

During the time between the original creation and the final restoration, Jesus is actively healing and moving the world closer and closer to healing. As Jesus brings his kingdom into contact with earth, more and more of the broken world is restored.

Sometimes this means that physical healings happen. The blind see. Cancer is miraculously healed. A couple weeks ago, a friend of mine's ten-year-old girl was bitten on the foot by an extremely poisonous snake. Her mother prayed over her as she smiled all the way to the nearest hospital where doctors were dumbstruck as to how she had survived! Sometimes Jesus also heals less tangible things like broken marriages or abusive relationships between fathers and sons.

Are there any areas of brokenness or suffering in your life? Jesus loves to restore things that are broken. He's actually really, really good at it. And that's really, really good news to a broken world!

Jesus frees people from oppression.

Oppression is a word with a wide variety of interpretation, but none of them are positive. Jesus flipped tables and chastised religious leaders (John 2:13-17) for the way they treated people, putting restrictions and laws on them that kept them from meeting with God. He also healed people who were oppressed by spiritual forces, unseen by the world (Mark 5).

Whether you face oppression from people around you, or from the unseen spiritual world, Jesus is the Mighty King who can overcome any oppressor.

Jesus shows people that God cares for them.

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)

Jesus, in his ultimate sacrifice, showed the world that God was willing to go to whatever length to redeemingly love his people.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:21)

The most scandalous event in history happened when the perfect, righteous, sinless man, Jesus, the only true Son of God, died a death and was separated from his Father as a payment for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). It was the most painful, gut-wrenching, awful act that has ever occurred. The very weight of the event would crush our spirits if God allowed us to fully understand its magnitude.

How much gratitude would you feel if someone paid for a tank of gas for your car? What about if they paid for a \$100 steak dinner for you and your wife...and babysitting? What would you do if your worst enemy bought you a brand new house and never asked for anything in return? While each of these is amazing, they are nothing compared to Jesus dying so that you can have a restored relationship with God.

When we understand just how much God cares for us, we can live in a state of unshakable happiness, even when we feel like no other person in the world cares. Jesus came to show the world how deeply God cares for his people. That is good news.

How do we apply the gospel to normal, everyday life?

Let's look again at Matthew 6:24.

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

If we're going to become fluent in the gospel, speaking it into our normal, everyday lives, we cannot miss this verse. It is absolutely key to the idea of gospel fluency! Jesus tells his followers that they cannot serve both God and money. You can only serve one master because that is the way you were designed. This idea wasn't anything new to Jesus' day. In the time of Moses, God spoke to his people through the Ten Commandments, warning them against idolatry:

“You shall have no other gods before me.” (Ex 20:3)

God knew that the best thing for his people would be to be completely devoted to him. He also knew that to be anything less than completely devoted to him would mean not being devoted at all. Long before Jesus said it, God was telling his people, “You cannot serve two masters.”

Today, all of our struggles of faith can be traced back to this idolatry. Often when we think of idols, we think of the great statues, temples, and effigies of religions and cultures on the other side of the world, or far back into history. “That doesn't really happen anymore” may be the thing we tell ourselves about idol worship, since we don't see them obviously propped up around us here and now.

But the truth is much different. Unfortunately, idol worship is more prevalent today than any other time in history. What may surprise you even more is that America probably has more idols than almost any other country on earth...we just don't call them that.

Let's define idolatry:

Idolatry is giving anything (bad or good) authority which only belongs to God.

The Creator has designed you for a specific purpose and given you a specific identity. God is the one with supreme authority, and to say that you are following Jesus is to say that you are doing as he commands. The often-used title of Jesus, Lord, is not just a hollow, flowery word to make him sound more interesting. The Old Testament Hebrew word for Lord is the word Adonai, meaning “sovereign, master, controller, or owner.” The New Testament, referring to Jesus, uses the similar Greek word Kyrios, which means “supreme in authority, controller, master.” So when the Bible refers to Jesus as Lord, it means that he is the one in control. To give authority in your life to anything or anyone else -authority which only belongs to Jesus- is cosmic spiritual treason.

Idolatry today takes many forms. We may not think we worship idols, but we do. What things in your life have you given authority to? What things or people are able to dictate your joy? Jesus says in John 16:33, *“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart (Be happy!); I have overcome the world.”* Isn't it interesting that Jesus commands us to be happy? So, when we don't have enough money, or we don't gain the approval of a certain person, we are faced with a choice: Obey Jesus and find happiness in Him, or, let this other person or thing dictate my joy.

Idols Take Captives

Idols are powerful. And idols are sneaky. Today idols take different forms than a golden calf or a bronze snake, but they're just as real and just as dangerous. What controls you? Money? Sex? Power and authority?

The approval of your parents, your spouse, friends, or boss? If your house caught on fire, what are the things you would risk your life to try and keep safe? When do you become anxious or irritable? What are you most afraid of? If you honestly answer these questions about yourself, it's likely that you'll begin to identify some of the idols in your heart. And idols don't play games; they take captives.

Idols take captives. If you worship money, your mood can be dictated by the state of your bank account, or the amount of hours your boss gives you at work, or how much your spouse spends at the grocery store. Just like any other idol, money will allow you to worship by offering sacrifices: your time, your energy, blood, sweat, tears, emotions, sleep, friends, family, memories, and integrity. When we worship something, we become captive to it. Our choices and our actions are dictated by the pursuit of what we worship and what we are captive to.

To worship something literally means “to ascribe worth” to the object of worship. We really do worship idols! This is why when the stock market crashed in 2008, people could be seen jumping from 50th story windows of New York skyscrapers. The thing they found most valuable, their god -money, possessions, power- had died. And when the thing you find most valuable in life dies, your own life barely seems worth living. This explains also the severe heartbreak of the girl-in-love whose boyfriend cheated on her. Obviously, this should hurt. Sin hurts people. But for the girl who knows that Jesus is supremely valuable to her, instead of her dating relationship, this awful tragedy is survivable.

The death of our idols can do two things: it can destroy us, or it can bring us to the humble position of crying out to the True God, who is the only one who can give us lasting joy and fulfillment. That's the good news of Jesus. He gives us what only he can. This is why it is a supremely loving thing for God to say, “**You shall have no other gods before me,**” or for Jesus to say, “**You cannot serve two masters.**” The best thing for us, which we were always designed for, is to be mastered by the only true Master.

What are some of the possible consequences of giving authority in your life to something other than Jesus? If you're feeling brave enough, stop here and list out some answers to that question before continuing to read.

Liberty To The Captives

Once you begin to see more clearly the effects of sin and brokenness on the world, the good news of Jesus can really become good news. We can't truly value our freedom until we understand the depths of our slavery.

In Luke 4:18, Jesus boldly states his intentions:

“The Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives.”

Jesus knew that all the world was captive to sin and brokenness. He knew that without divine intervention, the world would be forever sentenced to a life and death of unfulfilled design, suffering, and waste. Even though we are the guilty party who has brought this brokenness upon ourselves, Jesus, in immense love, restores and redeems us, and makes us pleasing to our Creator who is the greatest source of joy in existence.

While many would say that a life of devotion to Jesus comes at the cost of great happiness, those who have experienced the deepest joys of following Jesus know that their happiness infinitely surpasses any joy they could have gained without Him.

In fact, the good news of Jesus sets us free from slavery to our sorrows. Isaiah 53:4, speaking of Jesus, says:

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

While we will surely have sorrow in life, because of Jesus, we don't have to be slaves to them! We can fully experience godly, gospel-centered sorrow, understanding more and more the weight of sin, and looking forward to the full redemption and coming restoration of creation by King Jesus (Rev 21:4-5).

Applying The Gospel To Life Now

If you honestly answered the questions asked earlier, then you've probably identified some of the idols that have been holding you captive and keeping you from experiencing the kind of life that Jesus desires for you. And if you've read the previous section, you can hopefully also see how the good news of Jesus can set you free from slavery to your idols. If you want to be free to be mastered by the only True Master, here's what I recommend:

1. **ACKNOWLEDGE** to yourself and to God that you've fallen prey to an idol. It may or may not be entirely your fault, but really that doesn't matter that much. Just like a drug addiction, the first step is admitting there's a problem.
2. **CONFIDE** in someone else. This doesn't mean to put it on a billboard for everyone to see. Start by telling your closest friend or a trusted mentor who will both lovingly accept you and gracefully help point you back to the truth of Jesus.
3. **DESTROY** the idol. When the Israelites would return to God from their idolatry, they didn't leave their idols sitting on the shelf...they destroyed them! This may or may not need to be applied literally to your life. If you've idolized sex and are addicted to pornography, you may need to get rid of your laptop, install blocking software on your smartphone, or even (gasp!) disconnect the internet at your house entirely. However, if you've idolized something like money, I'm not advising you get rid of it all, though it may do you a lot of good to start giving charitably as a way to combat that idolatry! Whatever it is that you've given authority to in your life, you need to figure out how to cut off its power. Tell others around you about this as well so that they can help you in times of weakness.
4. **REMEMBER** the promises of God. The good news of Jesus is always good, but people are forgetful. Find a good Bible-reading plan that gets you in God's word daily. Set reminders on your phone of God's promises. Write verses on your bathroom mirror, on sticky notes on your computer, or on a slip of paper in your wallet. Wherever it is that your idol tempts you, make it impossible to forget the promises of God.

Learning to live a Mastered life takes time. Idols take captives, and captives get used to living in captivity. We've build habits, excuses, and rationalizations for why we do the things we do. Sometimes Jesus frees us from our idols in the blink of an eye. But other times, he takes us through a process where we slowly learn to trust him more and be more satisfied in him than in our idols. The good news of Jesus is that, whether immediately or over time, he can and will set us free to live the life we were designed for.

Case Studies

So let's get down to some tangible examples. How does this idea of gospel fluency actually work itself out in the Bible? As you take time to read the following stories, answer these questions:

What is the good news in this story?

1. Who is the good news of Jesus being presented to?
2. What things had the person(s) given authority to in their lives that weren't Jesus?
3. What is the good news that allowed them to come back under the authority of Jesus?
4. What happened as a result of Jesus' good news impacting their life?

Personal Application

1. In what ways are you also slave to the same idols as those in the passage you read?
2. According to this passage, what is the good news of Jesus for your life today?
3. What could some of the consequences be of continuing to live under the authority of this idol?
4. What could some possible results be of living under the authority of Jesus instead?

- Woman at the Well (John 4:1-42)
- Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14)
- James to the Diaspora (James 1)
- Paul to the Galatians (Gal 3)
- Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18:18-30)
- Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
- Religion (Matthew 7:21-23)
- Jesus calms a storm (Matthew 8:23-27)
- Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8)
- The apostles in Acts:
 - Acts 5:17-42
 - Acts 6:1-7
 - John 5:32-46
 - John 15:1-17

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- Why is it important to be able to apply the gospel to normal, everyday life?
- In your life, what have you given more authority to than Jesus?
- How would life be different if believers were regularly and fluently speaking the gospel into the issues of normal, everyday life?
- What could it look like for followers of Jesus to start to fluently speak the gospel to each other and to the lost world around them?

RESOURCES

The Story Of God

Telling Your Story With Jesus As The Hero