

The background of the cover is a photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and dark blue. The water reflects the colors of the sky. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of palm trees are visible against the bright horizon.

The Gospel in

99

WORDS

*Key Words That Unlock
the Good News*

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call

To speak out in such a way as to attract another's attention. To address someone by name.

He has saved us and called us with a holy calling. 2 Timothy 1:9 (HCSB)

God's Call to Man. God has issued a call to those on earth (past, present, and future) to repent and to return to their Creator (See Acts 17:30). This call and other calls of God to individuals can occur in a multitude of ways, and in fact every call is in some way unique.

There are numerous kinds of calls that God issues to man: to salvation, to holiness, to specific service, to ministry, and others. The Bible gives many accounts of God calling people, of the blessings of answering in obedience, and of the consequences of not obeying the call of God. Here are a few examples:

- The LORD called to Moses (Exodus 24:16 NIV);
- Jesus called His twelve disciples (Matthew 10:1 NIV);
- Jesus called the crowd to Him (Matthew 15:10 NIV).

God never calls us because He doesn't know where we are, but rather to help us realize where we are and understand how we should respond. When God called, "*Where are you?*" to Adam in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:9 NIV), it was to help Adam face his disobedience.

Our responses to God's call may be compared to various negative responses we may get when we call someone on the telephone:

- Wrong number? – Moses thought God should have called his brother Aaron (Exodus 4:10), but God doesn't call wrong numbers.
- Busy signal – Some people profess to be doing good, but do not possess life in Christ (Matthew 7:21–23). Many are too busy with "good works" to establish a personal relationship with Jesus.
- Hold, please – After hearing Paul's testimony, Felix (the ruler) told Paul (his prisoner), "*When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee*" (Acts 24:25). It is dangerous to put God on "Hold."

As a young person, Samuel responded to the call of God positively. His answer gives us an example of a proper response whenever God calls:

The LORD came...and called.... Samuel responded, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."
1 Samuel 3:10 (HCSB)

Man's Call to God. The other crucial type of call is that in which man calls out to God: to hear our prayers, to bless us, to judge righteously on our behalf, to have mercy, and for countless other purposes. Calling to God in repentance and faith is essential for a person to experience salvation and establish a relationship with God.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.
Romans 10:13 (KJV)

Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.
Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)

My personal experience with God's call

God called me to be saved before my seventh birthday. I had been taken to church at least three times a week every week since my birth, unless I was sick. (Somehow my mother always knew when I was faking illness.) I didn't understand everything, but I knew that I was a sinner and I knew that Jesus died on a cross for me and I knew that I needed to personally ask Him to forgive me and save me. I did. And He did.

God called me to the ministry when I was 17. It was a very special and unique experience that I cannot adequately describe. But every call is different for each person. The Holy Spirit will make each call to service a memorable experience for a lifetime at the least.

God calls me today to follow Him and become more like Him. I haven't always been obedient, but He has always been faithful to forgive and cleanse me.

He is calling you. Are you listening?

The Romans used the cross extensively in the first century as an instrument of torture and execution. Those to be crucified were fastened to its vertical and horizontal timbers and left hanging on public display until they died by exhaustion and suffocation. Crucifixion was the act of execution by such means.

The death of Christ by crucifixion is central to the gospel message. Jesus paid our penalty for sin by dying on a cross. Our belief in the power of His sacrifice allows us to receive the atonement provided by God. Our sins can be forgiven only through the blood He shed on the cross.

And having made peace through the blood of His cross....

Colossians 1:20 (KJV)

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing; but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV)

The story of the crucifixion of Christ is included in all four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Each writer gives some unique information without contradiction of the others. The letters of Paul give further insight into the spiritual meanings of the event itself.

The cross is the most recognizable symbol of Christianity. As a symbol, it is often intricately crafted of gold and jewels. The cross of Christ was a gruesome sight. It was two pieces of wood stained by blood from the hands and feet of Jesus. Blood from the crown of thorns placed on his head and from the wounds on His back inflicted when He was scourged (whipped) while in the custody of Roman soldiers would also have stained the rough wood. Yet the greatest pain Jesus suffered was not physical at all. His greatest pain was that He accepted the guilt and penalty for our sinfulness.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: Everyone who is hanged on a tree is cursed.

Galatians 3:13 (HCSB)

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us....

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

In the English New Testament, the word “gospel” is translated from the Greek word *euangelion*, which means the “good news.” It is a message of salvation through Christ, as it is received by faith in the substitutionary death, burial, and victorious resurrection of Jesus. The original Anglo-Saxon word used to translate the Greek was *godspel*, or literally “god-story.” Eventually, it also came to refer to the first four books of the New Testament, which tell of the life and ministry of Jesus.

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Romans 1:16 (NIV)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God....

Mark 1:1 (KJV)

Paul and others warned against those who would attempt to change the gospel. Even in the first century there were such attempts.

I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from Him who called you by the grace of Christ, and are turning to a different gospel – not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are troubling you and want to change the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel other than what we have preached to you, a curse be on him!

Galatians 1:6–8 (HCSB)

Jesus gave His followers a mission that must be completed before His return: to take the gospel to all parts of the earth. The completion of this mission is the last prophetic sign yet to be fulfilled before Christ returns (the second coming).

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come. Matthew 24:14 (KJV)

The good news of the gospel is that eternal life is available to those who personally choose to receive Christ as Savior and Lord, but it is a limited-time offer! Christ is coming back to earth someday and I believe it could be soon. Don't wait too late!

lord

A title of respect, submission, or reverence, with applications including: father, husband, sir, owner, ruler, king, and God.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Deuteronomy 6:4 (NIV)

In the Old Testament, most English translations of the Bible use all capital letters (LORD) or smaller capital forms for the lowercase letters (Lord) to indicate that the word applies to Jehovah God. (If you have a Bible with study notes, look in the front of your Bible or at the footnotes where “LORD” is used in Genesis chapter one.)

In the New Testament, the Greek word *kurios* is used in all of the applications in the definition above. As the disciples began to more fully comprehend the true identity of Jesus as the divine Son of God, they changed the way they referred to Him. They had at first called Him “Teacher” or “Master” (both translated from the Hebrew *rabbi*), but with greater understanding of His identity, the word *kurios* (Lord) became a title for Him that reflected an acceptance of His divine nature.

The lordship of Jesus requires the recognition of and obedience to His authority. Jesus is the “boss” of our lives. He has the right to tell us what to do and how to do it. He has the right to expect obedience.

Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?

Luke 6:46 (NIV)

At present, only a believer can truthfully say “Jesus is Lord” because only believers have that relationship with Him. However, Bible prophecy shows that a time of judgment will come when every person, even the enemies of Jesus, will acknowledge His identity and authority.

At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:10–11 (NIV)

On judgment day it will be too late to ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior. Have you reached the place of the disciple Thomas? Though he had doubted the resurrection, when faced with the risen Christ Thomas said, “*My Lord and my God*” (John 20:28 KJV).

Have you accepted by faith that Jesus is both Lord and God?