

God's Gospel



Making HIM Known

God's Battle

God's Gospel

God's Names

God's Promise

God's Providence

God's Wisdom

God's Word

God's Gospel

BY JILL NELSON



P U B L I S H I N G

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For my grandson,
David Glenn House.

May the words of this book help you to
“taste and see” the good news of the gospel
in the hope that you would trust and
treasure Jesus with all your
heart, mind, soul, and strength.



But these are written so that you may believe that
Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by
believing you may have life in his name.

—John 20:31

Contents

Preface	9
Introduction: How to Use This Book	10
1. God Creates the World	14
2. Created for Joy	18
3. A Very Dark Day	22
4. God Punishes Sin	26
5. God Makes a Way	30
6. God Judges and Rescues	34
7. God Makes a Promise	38
8. God Gives His Law	42
9. God Promises a Savior	46
10. God's Promise Is Born	50
11. Jesus Is God	54
12. Jesus Understands Sinners	58
13. Jesus Teaches Sinners	62
14. Jesus Calls Sinners	66
15. Jesus Heals Sinners	70

16. Jesus Calms Fearful Sinners	74
17. Jesus Satisfies Sinners.....	78
18. Jesus Seeks After Sinners.....	82
19. Jesus Welcomes All Kinds of Sinners.....	86
20. Jesus Gives Joy to Sinners	90
21. Jesus Serves Sinners.....	94
22. Jesus Gives Up His Life for Sinners.....	98
23. Jesus Saves Sinners	102
24. Jesus Gives New Life to Sinners.....	106
25. Jesus' Promise: Joy Forever!.....	110
26. An Invitation from Jesus.....	114
 Appendix: Ten Essential Truths	 118



Preface

Someday our children will stand before King Jesus and hear Him say one of the following:

Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:34)

Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matthew 25:41)

Are you preparing your children for that day? What will determine whether they inherit the kingdom or hell?

We have no greater responsibility and privilege than to pass the gospel on to our children. It is the only means of salvation. If our children are to inherit the kingdom, they must embrace the gospel. Therefore, we must take the greatest care to present the true essence of the gospel, making sure that we include the bad news as well as the good news.

What bad news? Like us, our children are sinners who deserve God's righteous condemnation—the eternal wrath of God. We are utterly helpless to save ourselves. We cannot truly repent and believe the good news until we understand the reality, depth, and gravity of our plight. After all, you don't really appreciate and love a life preserver until you are in danger of drowning on a storm-ravaged sea. It is in the midst of our most desperate condition that Jesus' perfect redemptive work on behalf of sinners becomes the greatest news of all!

May this book serve as a tool for acquainting your child with this life-saving gospel. As you read these stories with your children and ponder the Scriptures presented, may the Holy Spirit be at work, bringing about understanding, repentance, and true belief. May they see the greatness and worth of Jesus and trust and treasure Him most of all!

Introduction

How to Use This Book

This book was written to give parents an opportunity to present solid truth to their children and to encourage real-life application of that truth.

Relational

Children receive more encouragement to learn when truth is presented by a trusted individual. Your positive, relational parent-child commitment will be a real benefit when you sit down together to read this book. Your time together over the Word should be positive, affirming, and loving.

Interactive

There is a greater impact when an individual *discovers* truth instead of just hearing it presented. Many questions have been incorporated into the text of this book to encourage your child to wonder and think critically. The process of discovery will be circumvented if you don't give your child adequate time to think and respond. After asking a question, wait for a response. If your child has difficulty, ask the question in a different way or give a few hints.

Questions and responses can be springboards for more questions and discovery as you interact with your child's mind and heart. The Holy Spirit is the real teacher, so depend on Him to give both you and your child thoughts and truths to explore together, and to bring the necessary understanding. Take the time to work through each story at a leisurely pace—giving time for interaction and further dialogue. The goal should be to get the material into the child, not just to get the child through the material.

Understandable

These stories have been written with attention given to explaining difficult or potentially new concepts. Some of these concepts may take time for your child to digest. Allow your child to ponder new truths. Read the story more than once, allowing the truth to be better understood and integrated into your child's theological framework. At times, have your child read parts of the lesson, giving an opportunity for visual learning.

Because vocabulary can be child-specific, define the particular words foreign to your child. Retell difficult sections in familiar wording, and ask questions to be sure your child understands the truth being taught.

Theological

More than just acquainting your child with an understanding of redemption through the gospel, this book is building a foundation of biblical theology for your child. As your child begins to correctly understand who God is and how He interacts with the world, he or she won't just have a vague notion of God, but will be able to relate to the God of the Bible.

Because the Word of God has convicting and converting power, Bible texts are quoted word for word in some parts. Some of these verses may be beyond the child's understanding, so you may want to explain unfamiliar words or thoughts. Even though clear comprehension may be difficult, hearing the Word itself is a means that the Holy Spirit often uses to encourage faith in your child (Romans 10:17). Do not minimize the effectual influence of God's Word in the tender souls of children.

Since the Word of God is living and active, allow the child to read the actual Bible verses as much as possible. Also, encourage your child to memorize some of the verses so he or she can meditate on them at other times.

Essential gospel truths are presented throughout the book. Use this as an opportunity to share God's work of grace in your life, and to converse with your

child about his or her spiritual condition. Be careful not to confuse spiritual interest with converting faith, and take care to avoid giving premature assurances. Fan the flames of gospel-inspired conviction and tenderness toward the sacrificial love of Jesus without prematurely encouraging your child to pray “the sinner’s prayer.”¹

Application

Understanding the truth is essential, but understanding alone is insufficient. Truth must also be embraced in the heart and acted upon in daily life. Often, children cannot make the connection between a biblical truth and real-life application, so you, the parent, must help bridge the gap.

Consider the following quotation by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

We must always put things in the right order, and it is Truth first. . . . The heart is always to be influenced through the understanding—the mind, then the heart, then the will. . . . But God forbid that anyone should think that it ends with the intellect. It starts there, but it goes on. It then moves the heart and finally the man yields his will. He obeys, not grudgingly or unwillingly, but with the whole heart. The Christian life is a glorious perfect life that takes up and captivates the entire personality.²

Spend a few days or even a week on each story. Reread the story, discuss the truths, and follow the suggestions in the **Learning to Trust God** section. Most importantly, help your child to see the truth of who God is and our desperate need for His saving work in the person of Jesus. Point your child to his or her

1. Some excellent resources for parents regarding the salvation of children can be found at www.children-desiring-god.org, including a booklet titled *Helping Children to Understand the Gospel* and two seminars from the 2007 Children Desiring God conference, *How Great a Salvation—“Leading Children to a Solid Faith”* and *“Presenting the Gospel to Children.”*

2. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1965), 61–62.

need to respond with heartfelt repentance and belief in the gospel. Look for daily opportunities to apply the truths of the gospel in the life of your child, showing how the gospel is pertinent to all of life.

Prayer

Ultimately, our efforts are effective only if the Holy Spirit breathes on our teaching and quickens it to the heart. Pray not only before going through the stories, but also in the succeeding days, that the Holy Spirit would be at work bringing about true saving faith, evidenced by a growing love for Jesus and a desire to walk in obedience to Him.

God Creates the World

Think about something really big, like a night sky filled with twinkling stars and a bright glowing moon. Can you reach out and touch them? Can you count all the stars in the night sky? How big is the moon? Could you hold it in your hands? How far away is it? Have you ever pretended that you could fly to the moon on a spaceship?

Now think about something very small, like a beautiful flower. Where have you seen flowers grow? Why do flowers need dirt and sunshine and water? And why do buzzing bees and pretty butterflies like flowers? Do they like the pleasant smell? What do flower petals feel like when you touch them gently with your finger? Have you ever given your mom some flowers as a gift?

Picture in your mind one more thing—absolutely nothing! That’s right! Close your eyes for a minute and try to imagine nothing at all. Or maybe just imagine darkness (since that seems like nothing at all). Do you know that at one time, a long time ago, that is what it would have been like—no sky, no stars, no moon, no sun, no flowers, no dirt, no trees, no bees, not even people like you and me? But it wouldn’t be true to say that there was NOTHING at all. Because there was always one thing there . . .

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

What always was? God always was. Before there was anything or anyone else, there was God. Why was God there at the beginning, before anything else? Because He alone is *eternal*. That means that God had no beginning, and He will have no end. He was always there, and He has always been alive. It’s hard for us to imagine not having a beginning, not having a birthday, but it’s really true of the one true God.

So the very first words of the Bible tell us something very, very important. They tell us about the most important Person of all—the one true God who always was and always will be. But they also tell us about what God did.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

God created something. What did He create? The heavens and the earth. . . . Wow! That includes everything there is! How did God do such a huge job? Did He have to go to a store to buy what He needed? (Oops! There were no stores yet!) Did He have helpers? We don't need to guess at the answers. The Bible tells us how God created everything.



God said, **“Let there be light,”** and there was light.

God said, **“Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters.”**

God said, **“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.”**

God said, **“Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit.”**

God said, **“Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night.”**

God said, **“Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth.”**

God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth.”¹

So how did God create everything? “God said . . .” and it was created. God just spoke, and things were created! Could you or I do that? Of course not! No one but God can simply speak with His voice and make something out of nothing. Can you imagine how strong and powerful God must be? Can you imagine how smart and wise He must be?

God spoke, and there were millions and millions of stars in the sky.
God spoke, and there were crystal clear lakes and huge, rocky mountains.
God spoke, and there were tall oak trees and corn plants and yummy peaches and apples.
God spoke, and there were whales and dolphins and eagles and sparrows.
God spoke, and there were pigs and cows and lizards and zebras and raccoons.

Everything you see, everything you hear and feel and touch and taste, and even everything you smell is there because God spoke and it was created. There is no one else like God. He is the Creator of everything.

So the next time you look up at the night sky, remember that God created this. There is no one else like Him! And the next time you hold a flower in your hand, remember that God created this. There is no one else like Him!

**The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. (Psalm 19:1)**

1. See Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24.



LEARNING TO TRUST GOD

- ✦ Read Genesis 1:1–25. How was God able to do such a big job? Why did He make the world to include so many different shapes, sizes, colors, smells, sounds, tastes, and textures? What does this tell us about what God is like? Read Psalm 19:1–4 and Romans 1:20.
- ✦ Because God is the one, eternal, glorious God who created all things, how should you act toward Him? Who created you? Who do you belong to? Read Revelation 4:11. What would it look like in your life to show that God is worth more to you than anything else?
- ✦ *Activity:* Read Psalm 148, and then plan to go to a park or nature center. Walk along the trails and point out specific things to look at, listen to, smell, and touch. Then turn your observations into praise refrains such as, “Praise the Lord, you fuzzy squirrels. Praise Him, you purple crawling beetles. Praise God, you tall, shady tree. Praise Him, you singing sparrow. Praise the Lord, you warm wind,” and so on. How could you praise God as you walk along?