

Praise for **Small Steps to Understanding a Big Gospel**

“The gospel message of Jesus Christ, the true record of His life and teachings in this world, is the foundation upon which His Christian church is based. Understanding it is a key step in growing in your faith. I encourage every Christian, new or ready to disciple others, to read *Small Steps to Understanding a Big Gospel*. This book helps readers understand complex theological concepts using a simple diagram that walks them through the act of salvation and the ever-evolving process of Christian sanctification. It does so in a step-by-step manner that is based in the truths of God’s word.

“Notes/Thoughts from reading:

- Dissuades the idea of a works-based salvation.
- Points the reader to God rather than man.
- A place to turn when they begin to ask questions, even after salvation.
- If you plan to disciple others or merely evangelize the gospel of Christ, read this first! Then you’ll be prepared to share it.
- Reveals the uniqueness of humankind, God’s greatest creation.
- The various learning points make it easy to digest the entirety of this book in small, time-sensitive bites.
- Reveals basic truths found in God’s word that is seldom ever uttered from our pulpits in today’s churches.
- Helps guide the reader to better understand salvation and what true salvation looks like and can be assured.
- Where has this book been my entire Christian life?”

-J.D. Wininger,

Follower of God, Writer, Speaker, & Friend (www.jdwininger.com)



“This book will help any believer in sharing the gospel. Monty Hobbs writes a concise Scripture based explanation of what salvation is, who created it and why, who initiates it, who maintains and secures it, and who provides the evidence of it: God. As Hobbs writes, “keep this explanation of the gospel simple” and therefore easy to understand, he uses diagrams as visual aids to describe what Biblical salvation looks like to him. Monty provides the Scripture reference to support each “small step”, as he explains building his diagram of the gospel, which is very useful. Even in this short book, you cannot help but see the majesty of God.”

~ Robert D. Welch Jr. DVM,PHD, DACVS



“It is a blessing to call Monty Hobbs and his precious wife, Bonnie, “my friends.” I had the privilege of pastoring Monty for several years and had opportunity to witness his relentless pursuit of the truth of the gospel which led to his considerable growth in his walk with Christ. Monty is a person possessing an unsatiable appetite for the Word of God that is evident in his book, *Small Steps to Understanding a Big Gospel*.”

Johnny L. Witherspoon



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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to those believers who fully understand that Jesus suffered and died for our redemption, but don't understand exactly how that happens or the difference between salvation and sanctification. It is also dedicated to those who want a better understanding of salvation so they have more and better tools when they are sharing the gospel. Finally, this little book is especially dedicated to those who are still searching for the peace in their lives that can only be given by grace from our Lord and Savior.

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I have more appreciation than I can ever say for my wife and daughter who suffered through endless questions and, “Hey, look at this. What do you think?” I also offer great appreciation and maybe even condolences to those who I peppered with questions and what if’s as they taught me the true meaning of Christ’s sacrifice, just a few of whom are Pastor Johnny Witherspoon, Pastor Brent Bolton and Rev. Steve Cook.

Thank you and I love you all.

small
steps
to
understanding
a
big
Gospel

Monty Hobbs



SHINE-A-LIGHT
PRESS

Introduction

There has been a lot said about salvation over the last two thousand years. People of different countries, groups, ethnicities, theologies and philosophies all seem to have come up with their own ideas about that concept. We, as the human race, have probably thought of just about every way imaginable to make it from this life securely into the one that follows it. We have conjured up so many varied methods of crossing over to the next world that we are now bringing back to life theories from ancient eastern religions and mixing in a few current ones, just to make the idea more palatable and fun.

Despite the centuries of debate and discussion, many people don't seem to think salvation is even necessary. They are happy to just run along, skipping and jumping their way through life, believing that every man's good is his own creation. And what about when their time on earth is finished? Well, it is incomprehensible to them that they will do anything but decompose back into the soil from whence they evolved hundreds of millions of years ago, never to be heard from again.

Yet others believe salvation is possible and struggle all their lives to obtain it. They volunteer, they give to the poor, they visit with shut-ins. They work themselves into a frenzy trying to earn their way into heaven. The sadness of beliefs such as these is when you ask them if they are saved, they will often reply, "No one ever knows for sure whether or not they are saved!" How terrible is that? You must work all your life, dedicating all that you are and all that you do, to raising your family and teaching them the things they should do to obtain eternal salvation. And then in the end, you must convince them to trust what they have been taught, what they have sacrificed their entire lives for, and merely hope that they have pleased God enough that they may enter into heaven. They have no assurance of eternity, or even that the god they worship and sacrifice for even cares one whit about them!

How very sad.

And, let us not forget the butterfly children. Those misguided souls who believe God is all love all the time, and in the end, will welcome everyone into heaven for an eternity of cuddles, hugs, and kisses. Where is the truth in this? There can be no authentic mercy without absolute justice! Without the judgment of God, what are people being saved from?

According to this injudicious belief, evil dictators, mass murderers and serial rapists are all sitting on God's lap for story time *without any hint of repentance*. I agree with these butterfly children in the fact that God is love. But Scripture also tells us that God is just.

“He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He.”
~ Deuteronomy 32:4

“For I the LORD, love justice...”
~ Isaiah 61:8

And, without judgment, there can be no justice;

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this
the judgment.”
~ Hebrews 9:27

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the
house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will
be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of
God?”
~ 1 Peter 4:17

At times in my life, I have dabbled with a few of these unfounded, non-Biblical ideas and even tried to get them to fit into the Bible a little. Mostly, I just ignored the Scriptures because they didn't say what I wanted to hear. Besides, reading the Bible used to feel a lot like studying for school (which I hated to do) and it was so hard to understand. I wanted no part of any kind of homework, especially on something like religion. I believed that if God wanted me to know something, I would just know it. I was, at least I thought at the time, satisfied with what little Biblical knowledge I had. The “deep” ponderings my friends and I would engage in about universal energy and the soul turned out to be shallow conversations, dressed up as attempts to impress each other, when in reality we weren't managing to impress anyone but ourselves and paying no attention to how little we actually knew about anything. What we were doing is exactly what Paul was warning Timothy about in the verse at the top of the following page.

“. . .and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

~ 2 Timothy 4:4

But thank God, I finally saw the destructiveness in placing my faith in foolish ways that are not, and never have been, of Him. Because of my trusting in the Lord, the Holy Spirit lives within me and perfectly leads me while I imperfectly follow. And, unlike all other religions, I have the perfect, unbreakable promise of God Himself, that I will spend eternity with Him. All the other religions of Earth tell us what we must do to obtain salvation. Christianity is the only religion where our salvation is already done. Christ took care of that two thousand years ago.

There are those who can and have written volumes on the subject of salvation. That is not my intent in writing this little book. Perhaps that is why I titled this effort the way I did, “Small Steps to Understanding a Big Gospel.” My goal is to simply and succinctly explain salvation in a way that anyone can understand. Yes, I will share the gospel with you, but in a way that perhaps you have not seen or heard before.

Even those who profess to be born again Christians sometimes hit a few stumbling blocks when trying to understand or explain exactly what salvation in the gospel message looks like. When I listen to a lot of very earnest and well-educated disciples of Jesus talk about salvation, they often get into lectures revolving around rebirth, regeneration, redemption, substitutionary atonement, transfiguration and the list goes on and on. As Christians, are these all valid topics we should know? And should we, as we walk along our paths toward sanctification, become knowledgeable and comfortable sharing these principles with others? Of course. They are valid doctrines with which we should be familiar. But, complete knowledge of all these lofty subjects is unnecessary for salvation. In my effort to keep this explanation of the gospel simple, I will not get lost in the Bible dictionary trying to use big churchy words to explain a truth that, in essence, is really quite simple. In an attempt to explain it in a way that will make it easy for you to understand and share with others, I will use Scripture, and, for my friends who are visual learners like me, I will include a diagram of what I believe Biblical salvation looks like.

There is nothing in the following pages that is intended to guilt you into becoming a missionary or someone who stands on street corners passing out literature. Neither am I trying to say that everyone should go to a Bible college or become a pastor. But I do have a mission.

I pray that by the end of my efforts, new Christians as well as more seasoned Christians who are farther down the path of sanctification can find some fresh understanding of what it means to be saved by the love and mercy of God Almighty – His abiding grace.

And, for my friends who have not yet made the decision to submit to Jesus and to give their lives over to Him, I pray that since you are already reading these few pages, you know in your heart that you are not yet complete because your life is missing its most important component. I pray that you are open to understanding what this “Jesus thing” is all about. Please keep searching. Read through to the last page. Then, if you haven’t done so already, commit yourself to a Spirit-led life for Jesus. It is for you, especially, that I write this book.

Chapter One

The Creation

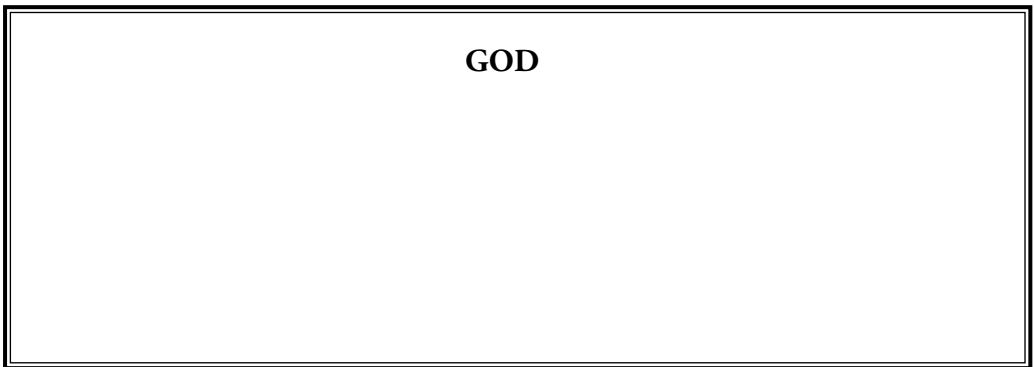
The first thing I would like for you to do is to understand that the lessons I will share with you are somewhat interactive. Trust me, there will be nothing complicated and we will not get all touchy-feely. I might, but you don't have to unless you want to.

What I need you to do is to get out a blank sheet of paper. Don't worry, I will not ask you to do a lot of writing. I'm taking care of that part, but I am going to ask you to, on occasion, write a word or draw a line. By the time you finish, you will have a tool to use as a reference for yourself, or for sharing the gospel with someone you care about. You don't have to memorize the diagram or draw the entire thing when you present the message. But you will have a better understanding of the gospel when you venture out in faith and share it.

So, when you take an occasional break, make sure you leave your paper with this book so you will have it the next time you sit down to continue reading.

Here we go!

Take your blank sheet of paper and turn it sideways, into the landscape position. Then at the top of your blank sheet of paper near the center I want you to write the word "God." Circle the word if you wish. I typically draw circles around all the distinct steps or parts of my gospel chart when I teach this to a class or individual as it seems to assist with clarity.



Learning Point One: God's Glory

That's all there is to it. You now have the most important thing to remember about the gospel. God. It is all about Him and His glory. What? You thought salvation was about you? Sorry dude (or dudette,) you need to get that thought out of your head right here at the beginning. I'll give you just one verse to make my point, even though there are many.

“Everyone who is called by My name, *Whom I have created for My glory*; I have formed him, yes, I have made him.”

~ Isaiah 43:7 (emphasis mine)

We were created for the glory of God. That is our purpose in life, that is why we exist, to glorify our Creator. I feel sorry for all those people who can't figure out why they are alive. Some of them feel as though they have nothing to contribute, no worth, because they haven't created something fantastic to better all of mankind. They are not the president of a bank or the owner of a huge car lot or a company that employs hundreds of people. They haven't written a book that has inspired a generation of people or cured any diseases that are threatening humanity. Some of these poor souls become so distraught over their insignificance, supposed or real, that they sometimes ruin what few good relationships they have. They slip into a state of depression or even become suicidal.

It is true that all the special abilities and status symbols these people believe they are lacking are indeed gifts from God. However, they are completely missing out on the most important gift of all because they are so absorbed in their own self-pity, and sometimes anger, that they don't allow themselves to comprehend what has already been offered to them. If only they would accept this life-changing award, the promised and demonstrated love of God. Simply being loved by our Creator, glorifying Him in the way that we live our lives, and sharing His love with others, can be more fulfilling than any invention, creation, business or cure that we could ever come up with on our own. How can that be true? Because our worth has nothing to do with us. We are made by God and for God alone, not by us or for us. It is about bringing glory to His name, not ours.

Look at it this way. Would you rather make a profit selling someone a car; or by writing a book people may truly love, for a time? Both could be an honorable endeavor and satisfying to some extent. Or would you rather help those same people understand that they have the opportunity to spend all of eternity with God in glory just as He has promised? What should we be looking for; short term profit,

immediate gratification, or praise from the masses? Or should we be looking for a soul satisfying life with the certainty of peace and glory in the mansion that the Lord has built for us to live in forever?

“Well, what about all those lucky people who have those gifts of success?” you might ask. “Doesn’t that prove that God loves them more than me?”

No. Absolutely not! That just means that God chose those people to give those particular gifts, according to His divine wisdom and unique plan for their lives. We are all given different gifts but have the same choice in how we use them. Will we serve God with those gifts and gain lasting rewards, or will we serve ourselves and suffer eternal punishment?

Consider the following Bible verse:

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,
that each one may receive the things done in the body,
according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

~ 2 Corinthians 5:10

Take just a minute and think about that. In the case of the car salesman, would it be better to have a good gift of gab and maybe a pension for numbers that make you capable of working a fantastic deal on a vehicle for someone that they, on average, will only have for about three years? The profit you make off the sale won’t last you nearly that long!

Perhaps you would like to be in the shoes of the writer, having the gift of words so you could sit down and pen all manner of prose that will inspire, motivate, or pull at the heartstrings of the readers and give them that warm fuzzy feeling.

All those things are temporary and do not exist beyond this lifetime. You must remember, *you will spend eternity somewhere, and you only have two choices.*

Look at it this way; you can study and work and gather all the rewards and glory that you will ever have while you are here in this life, or you can work for the glory of God and the treasures of Heaven that are promised to you by our Heavenly Father.

“Aim at Heaven and you will get Earth thrown in. Aim at Earth
and you will get neither.”¹

~ C. S. Lewis

Many Christians unfortunately believe they can have little to no impact on the world for our Lord. Why do they feel this way? Often it is because they are not wealthy, have never been to seminary or bible college, and even have difficulty bring-

ing to mind a great verse to combat some unbeliever's challenge.

Judges chapters six through eight tells us of a great general who defeated the enemies of the Israelites and brought them forty years of peace. The general was a man named Gideon. He was not a soldier or a politician but a son of a lowly farmer. An angel of the Lord found Gideon hiding from their enemies in a wine press, threshing wheat. But he was chosen to lead God's people to victory.

Even the disciples that Jesus selected were common laborers, fishermen and a hated tax collector. No, there are no special requirements to be called by our Savior to serve Him or to lead others to Him.

Learning Point Two: Man is a Special Creation

So, what does all this have to do with the title of this chapter, let alone the gospel? That is where I am headed. The first chapter of Genesis shows us that we are each a special creation and is also the origin of the gospel itself.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

~ Genesis 1:1 (NKJV)

That's right. It starts with Genesis 1:1, the story of creation. In the first five and a half days God spoke light, the heavens, the earth, the stars, the fish and the birds, and all the animals of dry land into existence. All God had to do was say it and it became so. God did what no one else can. He created something out of nothing. His creation was living, breathing, male and female, complete. They were perfect in all their forms.

But He was not finished yet. God next chose to make man.

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”

~ Genesis 1:26

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

~ Genesis 2:7

In His own image, God decided to make man. God took the time to form a man of the dust and then did something remarkable and unprecedented. God breathed life into the man. Unlike the rest of creation, we did not just pop into existence at His word. God took the time to “form” a man of the dust of the earth and then “breathed” life into him. The very breath of God gave life to us all.

But God wasn't finished with man yet. He did something else quite remarkable and different from the rest of creation. When God created the animals and the fish and the birds, He made them male and female and told them to multiply and fill the earth. He was finished with their creation at that point. But man was still alone. So, He caused a deep sleep to come over the first man, and He took one of the man's ribs and fashioned a helpmate that the man named Eve.

“And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.”

~ Genesis 2:21-22

Nowhere else in creation did God make male and female anything in this manner. He spoke everything else into existence, and there they were. But not humans.

We are special.

It is clear to see that God took extra time and an even more personal type of involvement with the creation of human beings. We were made in His image. The rest of creation was made the way that God wanted it and was perfect in an instant. But we are something special indeed. Not only was mankind given dominion over all that God had made, we were meant to have a relationship with our creator unlike that of any other part of creation!

Learning Point Three: The Fall

Man had free reign to care for the rest of God's creation, except for just one thing. God told Adam he could eat of any of the trees in the garden except for one.

“And 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.’”

~ Genesis 2:16-17

Unfortunately, man could not abide by this one rule. Genesis 3:1-6 tells how the cunning serpent challenged Eve’s obedience to God and tricked her into eating the forbidden fruit of the tree. She then offered the fruit to Adam, and he chose to also eat of the fruit. Verse seven says that after this their eyes were opened to the difference between good and evil. Adam and Eve not only became aware of sin’s existence, they immediately felt the effect of committing it as guilt set in.

In Genesis 3:14, God curses the serpent. Then we get straight to the point:

“And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”

~ Genesis 3:15

God is still speaking to the serpent at this point. When God said He would put enmity between the serpent’s seed and Eve’s, He was saying there would be a conflict between their descendants. They would be enemies. But something else was said that many people just read right past. In most Bible translations, the word “Seed” is capitalized when speaking of Eve’s Seed. That indicates deity. In this case, Jesus. Another telling sign of deity is the fact that God said, “her Seed” and not Adam’s seed. Basic biology tells us that the man’s seed fertilizes the woman’s egg. Not in this case. The mother of Jesus would have no earthly biological donor. Instead, Jesus’ father would be the Father of all creation.

God then foretells of the struggle between good and evil and that the serpent’s seed would bruise the heel of her Seed. This is telling us that the serpent’s seed would injure but not defeat Jesus. But then He says that her Seed will bruise the head of the serpent’s seed. This is a very important part of the verse. In many Bible translations, the word bruise is not used here. Instead, the word “crushed” is used and is perhaps more accurate to the meaning of the verse than the word, “bruise”. So, what happens when someone’s head is crushed? Death. Total defeat.

So, Genesis 3:15 is the first mention of the gospel, the good news that Christ would be crucified (bruised) and defeat (crush) sin and death forever. These verses are so important to the gospel story that they have their own churchy word to describe them; Protoevangelium or First Gospel.

The rest of Genesis chapter three explains that, because of their disobedience, God placed a curse on, not only Adam and Eve but, the whole earth. That is why we have disease, storms, earthquakes, wars, pestilence and so on. We were blessed with guardianship over all of God's creation. When Adam and Eve sinned, it was only right and just that God would curse them, their offspring, and their environment. It is the sin of mankind that is responsible for everything wrong in our fallen world.

Chapter One Review

Task 1 - Explain the reason for our existence:

Task 2 - Describe our purpose in life:

Task 3 - Explain how we know we are a “special” creation. Use Scripture.

Task 4 - God told man he had dominion over all the earth except for one thing. Name that exception:

Task 5 - Write down the verse in which we first hear of the coming Lord and His victory over sin and death:

Task 6 - Explain why we have earthquakes, terrible storms and disease:
