

RULE 2 ■ Know Your God

The Gospel—God’s Being and Doing in Our Time



Surveying the Site

Read the Blueprints. If Jesus were in human form again conducting his ministry today, where would we most likely see him? Would we want to be seen there? Where would he really be most welcomed? Answer those questions quietly within yourself, then share your responses with the group.



Checking Your Tool Box

Anyone who can see, hear, and feel can find brokenness in our world. Rising suicide rates, drug abuse throughout society, teenagers having babies, racial tension, endless violence across the globe, and abuse of our environment remind us of that daily. We hit and hurt, reject and ridicule, demean and destroy each other, ourselves, and the world. We also suffer from natural disasters (which for too long we have called “acts of God”). Earthquakes and hurricanes, famines and floods, and changing climates and raging fires shatter lives daily.

Our belief in God, Jesus, and the Spirit takes place in the midst of this brokenness. Our God, who is and does, calls us to be and do in this broken world. In fact, from the Christian perspective, God calls us most earnestly in and because of that brokenness. God responds to the brokenness with gospel, “good news.”

- Describe a “broken” situation where you have seen the church proclaiming the gospel. Did everything about the church’s being present there make sense?

Gospel probably has as many definitions as people defining it. We will begin this discussion by calling the gospel “the good news that God does not intend for us to live in brokenness.” God responds to brokenness with offers of healing and wholeness.

Our gracious God works to bring healing and wholeness to our brokenness. This happens in many ways, but they all fall into three categories.

1. God has created us with the potential to help one another heal and become whole. We have the capacity to treat one another justly, settle our differences, and consider ourselves partners rather than opponents. As we develop and use this capacity, the results exceed our expectations because the presence of God joins us and works within us.
 - Describe a time when you were an agent of the gospel or when you received the gospel through others.

What barriers had to be overcome to make the gospel known?

What adjustments had to be made to your personal agenda?
2. God has filled the world with wonders. Sights of beauty astound us, wonders make us marvel, and life often seems awesome and miraculous. In ways we realize and ways we do not, the presence of God within those realities heals us and moves us toward wholeness.
3. In ways beyond our understanding God touches us when brokenness brings us to the point of crying out for someone to hear. We experience times when we call, “Please help me!” and someone does, even though we see no one there.

- Recall a time when you experienced the gospel. This may have been during a service of baptism, in a time of prayer at a moment when the scattered pieces of your life fell into place, or when you experienced forgiveness for being involved in another's brokenness.

Along with this good news, those seeking a relationship with God receive a command to participate in God's offers of healing and wholeness. As we choose to develop and use our gifts and our capacity to care, we bring healing to others and ourselves and we move the world toward wholeness. As we learn to expect and to look for the presence of God in the world around us, our attitudes and ways of life help us and others to become more whole. As we strive to believe that God is in and around us in ways we have yet to understand, we become more aware of God in times of trial and times of success. That helps to heal our brokenness regardless of our surroundings and circumstances.

As the example of Jesus reminds us, the gospel comes with a price. Jesus dies to offer it to us. To receive it and live it, we must be willing to put the worst of ourselves to death and "be transformed" (Romans 12:1-2). Through such commitment, God uses the gospel and people who live it to change the world. The gospel and people who live it welcome strangers and create community, reconcile enemies and become friends, care for the victim and end hopelessness, confront the aggressor and establish justice, seek the forgotten and chase away loneliness, and much more.

The gospel is both a gift to receive and a message to proclaim. It takes many forms and faces. In and with every one, the God who is and does becomes recognizable. The gospel is God's being and doing in our time.

- In what places in your community is the gospel most needed? Record your responses for future reference.

Blueprints

The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Luke 5:30-32



Conversation with the Master Carpenter

Close your session with prayer. Lift up any prayer requests or insights. Sit in silence for a few minutes, reflecting with God on the journey you have made so far in this study. Each man may offer a prayer of a sentence or two that thanks God for something gained in the study.



On-the-Job Experience

Once or twice this week, anonymously do something that will be received as good news by someone else. Remember those close to you. While you're planning your surprise, imagine a world in which everyone did that regularly.

Group Action/Reflection

Select a situation in which the gospel is needed. As a group, attempt to bring good news to that situation. You may want to consult your pastor in selecting the right situation.