

# ONE-VERSE EVANGELISM:

an uncomplicated way to share the gospel using only one verse

## DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS

Begin by asking the two diagnostic questions developed by Dr. James Kennedy in “Evangelism Explosion.”

1) If you were to die tonight and you stood before Jesus and he asked you why he should let you into his heaven, how would you answer him?

2) If you were to die tonight, are you certain you would go to be with Jesus?

The answers to these two questions will help you understand how well the person you are talking with understands the Gospel and Jesus’ role in salvation. The proper answers are:

*1) I am trusting completely in your death on the Cross for my sins, you, Jesus paid the penalty for my sins and because of that I know you will welcome me into your heaven.*

*2) I know that I will have eternal life with Jesus in heaven when I die, because of the truth shared in question one.*

Many folks who do not understand the Gospel will somehow make their place in heaven dependent on how they lived their life or what they did on earth, i.e. “I did more good than bad” or “I went to church and was confirmed.” Their response to question #2 will demonstrate a lack of confidence that they will go to heaven, “I think or hope I will go to heaven.”

## ADVANTAGES TO THIS TYPE OF PRESENTATION

- It is short.
- It can be used effectively when time is limited.
- It is expandable. Analogies are optional, and you can make the presentation as long or as short as you wish.
- It is easy to understand.
- It is easy to learn and use, since there is only one verse to memorize.
- There is no need to flip back and forth through the Old and New testaments, which can be confusing to the hearer who is unfamiliar with the Bible.
- It gives you an opportunity to find out if the hearer clearly understands the gospel by giving him/her two chances to tell you the steps necessary for salvation.
- Often, when a conversation turns to spiritual topics, a person can ask the other person if he would like to understand the basic theme or story of the Bible. Tell him/her that if he/she is interested you can draw him/her a picture that will explain all sixty-six books of the Bible in a practical way that he/she can easily understand. Assure him/her that it will take only ten to fifteen minutes. People seldom resist the curiosity this approach arouses—few have ever had someone explain God’s Story and the whole Bible to them, let alone in ten minutes!

**IF HE/SHE AGREES, PROCEED WITH THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATION**

**◆ WAGES**

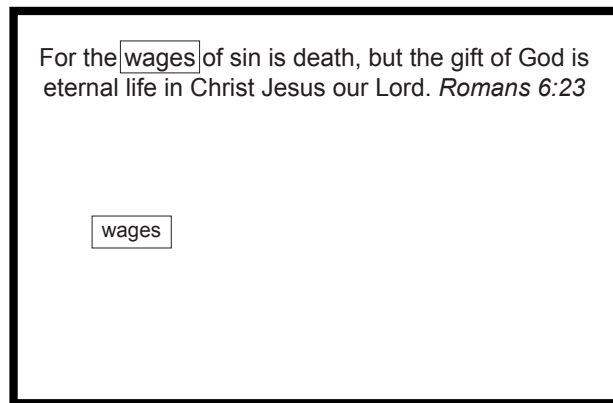
Open your Bible to Romans 6:23 and ask the person to read the verse aloud to you while you write it at the top of a piece of paper. Draw a box around the word **“WAGES”**, then write it midway down the left side of the page and box it there also.

Ask:

**“How would you define the term wages?”** Wages are the reward we receive for what we have done.

**“How would you feel if your boss refused to pay you the wages that were due to you?”** Deep down, we all know that it is only right that a person gets what he/she deserves.

We earn wages from God for how we have lived our lives. Suppose you were to work for me one day and I were to pay you fifty dollars. Fifty dollars would be your wages. That’s what you’ve earned. The Bible is saying that because you and I have sinned, we have earned death. We are going to die and be eternally separated from God.



**◆ SIN**

Draw a box around **“SIN”** in the verse and then write it below **“WAGES.”** Draw a box around it there.

Ask:

**“What do you think of when you hear the word sin?”**

**“How would a person have to live in order to get into heaven? Have you always lived a life like you just described?”** This should help him/her to see that even by his own definition he/she falls short of living a good and perfect life.

**“Sin is more an attitude than an action—it can be a hostile or apathetic response to God. At any point in your life, has God seemed far away?”** When he/she answers “yes,” draw in the lines of the cliff on both sides and explain that sin has separated everyone from God.)

**“Imagine that you agreed with your roommate on rules regarding how to use your I Pod. What would happen if your roommate ignored the rules and broke your I Pod? Would that create a separation or problem in your relationship?”** Our sin creates a distance between us and God.”

When the Bible says that you and I have sinned, it means that we lie, we lust, we hate, we murder, etc. The word sin in the Bible actually means, “to miss the mark.” In other words, God is perfect and we aren’t. Let me explain. Suppose each of us were to pick up a rock, and I say to you, “We’ll throw our rocks and hit the North Pole.” Well, you might throw farther than me, or I might throw farther than you, but neither of us would hit the North Pole. Both of us would come short. When the Bible says, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” it means that God has set a standard He expects every one of us to meet. That standard is God Himself. He expects us to be as pure as He is pure, as perfect as He is perfect. But it doesn’t matter how religiously we live, how good we are, or how hard we work, we cannot meet that standard. All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

### ◆ **DEATH**

Draw a box around the word “**DEATH**,” write it down on the illustration, and box it there.

Ask:

***“What thoughts come to mind when you think of death?”*** Death often means separation—when we die our soul is separated from our body. If a person chooses to reject God while he is alive, that separation will extend into eternity; the separation will ultimately result in eternal torment in hell. Not only will he/she experience separation from God today, but also forever.

### ◆ **BUT**

Draw a box around “**BUT**” in the verse and write it in a box between the bases of the cliffs.

Say: ***“This is the most important word in the verse because it indicates that there is hope for all of us. What we have talked about so far is bad news, but God has good news. What we’re going to talk about now is a contrast to what we just discussed.”***

### ◆ **GIFT**

Draw a box around “**GIFT**” in the verse and write it on the right side of the cliff. Box it there.

Ask:

***“What is the difference between a gift and wages?”*** (From now on, be sure to point back and forth to each side of the cliff to emphasize that the words contrast with each other.)

Say:

***“A gift is not earned by the person who receives it, but someone else pays for it. How do you feel towards someone who gives you an expensive gift? Some people try to earn God’s favor by doing good deeds, living moral lives, or taking part in religious activities. But it is impossible to earn something that has already been bought.”***

***“Say you wanted to buy a special gift for a close friend to show how much that person means to you. How would you feel if the friend refused to accept it without first paying you for it?”***

## ◆ OF GOD

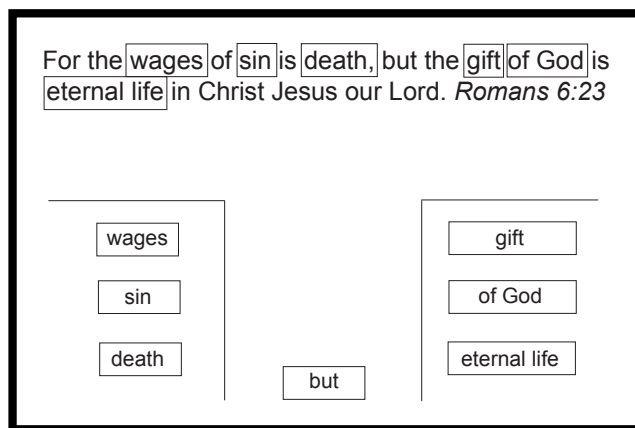
Draw a verse around **"OF GOD"** and write it on the right side of the cliff, across from **"SIN."** Box it. Point to **"SIN"** on the left side and then back to **"GOD"** on the right and explain that all of us have sinned but God is perfect and has not.

Say:

***"God gives the gift. I can't give it to you, a church can't give it to you, no one can give you this gift but God alone."***

Ask:

***"Why do you think God would want to give you a gift? Why does anyone want to give someone a precious gift?"***



## ◆ ETERNAL LIFE

Draw a box around **"ETERNAL LIFE"** and write it on the right side of the cliff with a box around it.

Ask:

***"What do you think eternal life is?"***

Point to **"DEATH"** on the left side and show that **"ETERNAL LIFE"** is the opposite.

Say:

***"Eternal life means a relationship with God in blissful harmony forever. Just as separation from God starts in this life and extends into eternity, eternal life starts now and goes on forever. No sin can end it."*** (Ask if there is any part that you have explained so far that he/she does not understand or if he/she has any questions. Be sure that each point is clear before you proceed any further. If necessary, go back and explain each point that is not clear.)

## ◆ CHRIST JESUS

Draw a cross between the cliffs as a bridge. Box the words **"CHRIST JESUS"** in the verse. Write **"CHRIST JESUS"** inside the cross.

Say:

***"Jesus is the means by which we can obtain the gift of eternal life. No one can offer a gift except the one who purchased it. He purchased it by paying for it with His life."***

***“Imagine that a police officer writes you a ticket for speeding and you go to court and the judge finds you guilty. But to your surprise, the policeman pays your fine out of his own pocket. In the same way, Jesus paid the fine for you—death.”***

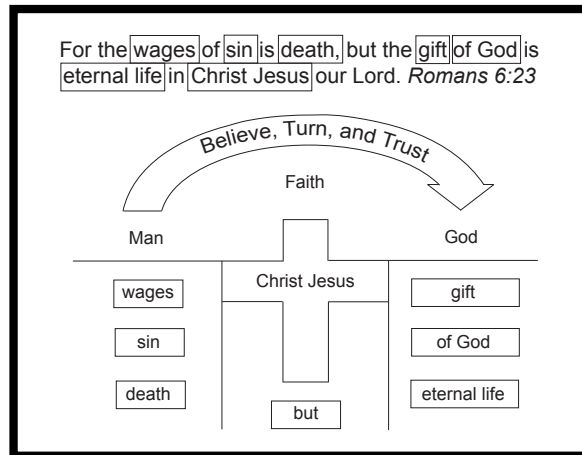
***“Let’s say that you were in the hospital dying of cancer. I could come to you and say, ‘I want to do something for you. We’ll take the cancer cells from your body and put them into my body.’ What would happen to me? (Pause) Right! I would die. What would happen to you? (pause) Right! You would live. Why? (Pause) Yes! Because I took the thing that was causing your death and placed it upon myself and I died as your substitute. The Bible is saying that Christ came into the world, and He took the sin that was causing your death. He placed it upon Himself, and He actually died in your place. He was your substitute! The third day, He arose, as proof that sin, death, and the devil had been conquered.”***

Hold out a pen to the person and ask him/her to imagine that someone had bought it for him/her as a present. As you hand it to him/her, ask him/her at what point the pen becomes his/hers (when he/she accepts it). Tell him/her that he can receive God’s gift by trusting in Jesus Christ.

***“A person is dying because his heart is diseased. Someone volunteers to donate his heart for a transplant, knowing that he will have to die in order to give it up. But first, in order to save his own life, the recipient must agree to accept the heart. It cannot be forced upon him. In order to receive God’s gift, you must have faith in Jesus Christ.***

***Now you may be wondering, “What is faith?” The word “faith” means “trust.” For example, you weren’t here when that chair was made and you didn’t examine how it was built before you sat down. You are simply trusting in the chair to hold you. Putting your faith in Christ means trusting Him to save you—not trusting your church membership, your good life, or your baptism to get you to heaven, but trusting Christ and Him alone. Your trust has to be in the One who died for you and arose. It is then that God gives you heaven as a free gift.”***

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## **TRUE FAITH INVOLVES HEARING**

The Bible sometimes puts hearing before believing. John 5:24 says, ***“Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned.”***

It is self-evident that to believe in a person, you must know about the person, the content that must be known. The lost person must know about the Christ. Not just ***“I believe in God...”*** (James 2:19). Note: Sometimes the New Testament simply commands one to believe without spelling out the content of faith. But when that is spelled out, it normally has to do with whom Christ is or what He has done:

- His deity—***“that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”*** (John 20:31)
- His humanity—***“Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”*** (1 John 4:2) Note: This is not a big problem today. In John’s time, however, the Gnostics denied this. Christian Scientists in our day deny the humanity of Christ.
- His death—***“that Christ died for our sins”*** (1 Corinthians 15:3)
- His resurrection—***“and that he rose again”*** (1 Corinthians 15:4)

## **FAITH INVOLVES BELIEF**

The most basic meaning of the Greek words translated *believe* and *faith* is “to accept something as being true” or “to be convinced of something.” The reason is that a person can understand something and yet not accept it as being true.

Illustration: If I say, “I live in Dallas, Texas,” you may know where that is, and even know how to get there. However, that doesn’t say you believe me when I say I live there. In a similar manner, you can understand the facts about Christ and yet not accept them as being true.

## **FAITH INVOLVES REPENTANCE - TURN**

Repentance means a change of mind or attitude toward your old life and toward God. This means a turning from their own desire to rule their world (from sin) to God, and progressively showing by your conduct and words that Jesus is Lord of your life. (Acts 26:18-20)

## **FAITH INVOLVES TRUST**

The two Greek words translated *believe* and *faith*, include the idea of “trust.” This means “reliance on” or “dependence upon.” The New Testament emphasizes this many times by putting a preposition after believe.

- John 3:16: ***“that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”***
- John 3:36: ***“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.”***

The point—one can understand the good news of Christ and even accept it as being true and yet not be trusting in Christ to save him. Conclusion: Saving faith involves hearing, believing and trusting.

## **INVITE TO TRUST CHRIST**

### **Invitation:**

Looking at the diagram, ask this question: “Where are you right now?” Point to the two different sides. Then ask, “Where do you want to be?”

If they point to the right side, explain how this will often mean persecution. Ask, “What will happen to your relationships with family and friends who disagree with your following Jesus? 2 Timothy 3:12 say, “ all who desire to live godly will be persecuted”. Ask, “What do you think this might look like in your world?”

After clarifying about the cost, ask, “Do you still want to put your faith in Jesus?”

If so, ask them if you can **pray for them**. Pray God’s saving grace upon them to open their eyes to see their sin and genuinely turn and trust in Jesus.

Then, take them to Romans 8:16, ask them to read it. Explain how it is God the Spirit who informs us that we are truly God’s born again children, and that God the Father is more than able to show you that you are truly His child.

Lastly, I assure them that I will be praying for God’s gracious, saving work in their lives, and ask that they would let me know when they begin to see signs of spiritual life in their lives.

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Naturally, you will want to put the questions and explanations in this presentation into your own words. After you have become familiar with this method, be sure to personalize it—use your own stories or analogies so that the presentation becomes a natural part of you. Be sure to listen carefully as the person you are talking with answers the questions. Try to understand where he/she stands in relation to the Gospel and adjust your presentation to suit his personality and needs. Be alert to signs of confusion as you explain. Most important, remember that the power to change lives is not in having an effective, smooth-flowing illustration. It is the Spirit of God who opens people’s hearts to hear the message of salvation (Jn. 6:63-65). Let us sharpen our tools and be ready always to give the answer that every person needs to hear with clarity and simplicity.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

<http://gospel.spreadtruth.com/resources> and <http://www.sharejesuswithoutfear.com>

Adapted from an article by Randy Raysbrook in Discipleship Journal #34, 1986 and “You Can Tell It!” by Larry Moyer, Evantell Ministries. Further modified within Crossway International.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 6:23*

