

Text – The gospel in chairs	Actions
<p><i>There's a way of summarizing the gospel that we'd like to show you; it's been around for a few years, and it's called 'The gospel in chairs'. It's something that we found on a YouTube video. It was based on a presentation of the gospel suggested by Brad Jersak, in his book A more Christ-like God, but Brad says it was an orthodox priest who suggested it originally.</i></p> <p><i>And so we would like to just give you a visual representation of the gospel in chairs that we've learned. Here's what we'd like to do: we'd like to walk through the basics of the gospel. There's so much we could say, but we just want to walk through the very basics of the gospel... visually... twice. We're going to do it two slightly different ways. The first time through, we'll try and highlight key aspects of the gospel that many of us have heard repeated throughout our lives.</i></p> <p><i>And there's much beauty and much truth in the first way the gospel is presented. But we think there's also some things that could perhaps be miscommunicated. And maybe we can do a better job – a more biblical job – by addressing some of those issues. So we will walk through it a second time and try to make those adjustments. Are you ready? Here's the first version.</i></p> <p>In the beginning, God... created the world...</p> <p>and he created us in his image and in his likeness. And God – who is love – desired nothing more than to have a face-to-face love relationship with his image-bearers.</p> <p>But God – who is love – knows that love is a choice, and so he invested in us the real, actual freedom to choose, but with laid-out options as to whether we want to remain in intimate relationship with him or to walk away from that.</p> <p>But we chose to turn our back on God and to go our own way. And we sinned in Adam and Eve and then in Cain and Abel... And in generation after generation around the world, we have chosen the way of sin. And God who is not only love but is also a holy and righteous judge, too pure and too holy to look upon sin, turned his back to us.</p>	<p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p><i>Raise the G chair</i></p> <p><i>Raise the H chair</i></p> <p><i>Turn chairs face to face</i></p> <p></p> <p><i>Turn H away from G</i></p> <p><i>Turn G away from H (back to back)</i></p>

And we were under the condemnation of God, who is our source of life.

But God is not just condemnation and judgement; he is not just a holy and righteous judge; he is a loving father and so he sent Jesus.

And **Jesus came to Earth** and became one of us. He took on our flesh. And he not only took on our flesh but he showed us what a perfect human life was designed to be.

Eventually, on the cross, **he took on our sin**. And in so doing, he also took on the wrath of God who turned his back on his son. And Jesus not only took on the sins of the world, but he took on the wrath of the Father **and then died...**

...but **rose again** to put that wrath aside.

Now Jesus not only **changes our** hearts...

...Jesus has also **changed** the heart of the Father...

– as we sometimes sing, “On the cross when Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied”.

So God has vented his wrath on Christ, and he can now relate to us in mercy.

That was the gospel round one. Did you recognise much of it? Those of you who have grown up in the church will certainly have heard it this way.

But maybe some things can be improved on. So let's try again...

*Sit in **H***

Raise arms in cross shape

Hang head

Stand up again

*Turn **H** back to **G***

*Turn **G** back to **H***

In the beginning **God**... created the world...

*Raise the **G** chair*

and he **created us** in his image and in his likeness. And God – who is love – desired nothing more than to have a face-to-face **love relationship** with his image-bearers.

*Raise the **H** chair*

Turn chairs face to face

But God – who is love – knows that love is a choice, and so he invested in us the real, actual freedom to choose to love him back or to go our own way. And we **chose** to go our own way, in the garden, with Cain and Abel and in generation after generation... and when we made that choice... God... **[pause]**

*Turn **H** away from **G***

*Take **G**, raise it high over **H** and place it so as to face **H**.*

... pursued us.

He came looking for us in the garden.

He came looking for Cain after he killed Abel and he said to him, “I’ll protect you from other people’s vengeance.”

He came looking for the children of Israel. And **even when** we turned our back on him again...

*Turn **H** away*

...**God** came again and said, “I will give you laws to guide you. I will give you directions to lead you back towards holiness.”

*Take **G** high over **H** again.*

And **we** said we prefer the golden calf.

*Turn **H** away*

And **God** said, “I will send you prophets who will teach you, who will call you.”

*Take **G** over **H***

And **we** said no.

*Turn **H** away*

And **God** said, “I’ll put you in captivity, not just to punish you, but so that you will grow thirsty for more of me.”

*Take **G** over **H***

We said no.

*Turn **H** away*

And God kept coming to us again and again. And we kept turning away until finally, because he loves us, at the right time he sent his son, Jesus, to **come to Earth** and become one of us, to live as the perfect man among us.

[with growing excitement...]

Not since Adam had the universe ever seen a perfect human being, and he was freaky! He taught us how to love, not only God but our neighbours; and to love ourselves; and even to love our enemies; they learned to see the value and worth in all people.

Jesus lived a life that rebuked religion but welcomed every sinner who felt they were outside of God's reach. He never pushed them away in judgement; he always pulled them close.

And then... after he had reached out to a woman at a well who was Samaritan and said, "I can't believe you're talking to me." And he said, "I'm not here to judge you; I'm here to reveal myself to you."...

...and after he had talked to Zacchaeus, a tax collector, whom the whole town despised, but Jesus said, "I want to come to your house. Let's hang out together." He front-end loaded acceptance, and that led to Zacchaeus's repentance...

...and after he talked to a woman who had been caught in adultery and was expecting to be stoned, and he said "Neither do I condemn you; your accusers are gone." He protects her from them. And then he says, "I don't condemn you. Go and sin no more." And notice the order of that: "Neither do I condemn you, **now**, go and sin no more." And notice that he doesn't add, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more... ..or then I really **will** condemn you."

This front-end-loaded acceptance and forgiveness just flows out of his life. And we can't handle it... we don't know what to do with it, and it's threatening to our religious institutions that are predicated on an eternal insecurity in our relationship with God.

Until, finally, we **crucify** him.

Sit in H

Raise arms in cross shape

And we pour out **our** wrath on Christ while the Father looks on and expresses his love and his reconciliation through Jesus.

And **Jesus dies**.

but he **rises again**

and **calls us** into a relationship with a father who has always been the Prodigal Son's father longing for us to come home.

This is God's disposition towards you.

And it doesn't stop **there**.

He promises not just to be a God who will live **with** us but he wants to live **in** us and us in him. He gives us his Holy Spirit, and together we do life.

This is really, really good news!

Hang head

Stand up

Reach out arms of welcome

*Turn **H** to face the front*

*Take **G**, lift it up and place it on top of **H***