



One Verse Evangelism

LEADER GUIDE

GOALS

The goal of this study is to help participants understand the Gospel message and discover a way of sharing that message using one Bible verse, Romans 6:23

Using This Guide

This guide was created to help you lead a Sunday School class or other small Bible study group to understand the gospel message and discover a way of sharing that message using one Bible verse. This Leader Guide includes Bible commentary and ideas for leading the group Bible study time. A handout has also been developed for use by the group during and after the study time (referred to as the Learner Guide).

Actions To Take Prior To The Group Study Time

- 1** Secure copies of the Learner Guide.
- 2** Contact the members of your Bible study group to let them know your group will be studying this special lesson. Encourage them to spend time prior to the group meeting reading and reflecting on Romans 6:23. Encourage them to memorize the verse in their favorite translation.

If you use social media, you may want to send a message similar to the following: Memorize Romans 6:23 and come prepared to discuss the deep truths in this one verse.

- 3** Study Romans 6:23 using your Bible and the material provided in this Leader Guide (see “For Your Personal Study”).
 - 4** Plan the group time using “Ideas For Leading Your Group Time” provided in this Leader Guide.
 - 5** Gather resources needed to lead the group time.
 - 6** Arrive early, making sure you are the first person in your group to arrive. Greet each member of the group as they arrive.
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- 7 Lead the group time using the plan you created, adjusting as you go.
- 8 After the group time, contact group members who were not able to attend, sharing with them a summary of the things the group discussed. Secure from each group member not present the names of at least three people who need to hear the Gospel message, asking each group member to pray for the people they identify.

All Bible texts used in this Leader Guide are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible. The Learner Guide was developed without printed Bible text so you can use the translation you prefer to lead the group time.

For Your Personal Study

The beauty of the Gospel is how simple it is. Even a child can understand it. The simplicity seems to be forgotten when it comes to sharing with another person. We tend to make it so much more complex than it has to be. There is nothing wrong with memorizing multiple verses and being prepared to give an answer to even the hardest of questions. However, there is something wrong with deciding not to share with anyone until you can answer all the possible questions you could be asked.

What if you could share the Gospel message with a person using only one verse? Would being able to use only one verse help you share with more people? That is the hope of this study. For this study, we will examine Romans 6:23, which is a single verse that can be used to share the Gospel.

Getting the Backstory

Paul was near the end of his third missionary journey and was stuck in Corinth for the winter. Travel by boat was something people just did not do that time of the year during Paul's day. When it was safe to travel, he would return to Jerusalem with an offering he had collected for the Christians who were suffering there. What would he do next? He had a strong desire to go to Rome and then to Spain. At this point in his life, he had not preached in Rome, but knew some of the believers in the city. Rome was the capital city and would be the place to go if a person wanted to reach other parts of the known world for Christ.

Paul would need the support of the believers in Rome if it was to be his base for a journey to Spain. With the three months he had in Corinth, Paul wrote a letter to the Roman believers, outlining the Gospel message and his vision for a future missionary trip.

The focus of the letter was God declaring a believer to be right with God through faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone. After a brief introduction (1:1-17), Paul explained the need for all people to be declared right before God or justified (1:18--3:20) and that this justification was by faith in Christ alone (3:21—11:36). Paul then turned his attention to Christian behavior (12:1—15:13) and closed his letter with a conclusion and greetings (15:14--16:27).

Chapter 6 falls in the section about all people being justified by faith in Christ alone. Within his presentation, Paul addressed some objections people had to the Gospel including antinomianism. This teaching minimizes the need for the law, inferring that people could live immoral lives if they chose to do so and still be Christians. Paul reminded the Roman believers that they were no longer slaves to sin, but were now slaves of Christ and a higher moral standard. It does matter how we live in this world, but not in a legalistic way. Believers were to function out of love for God and not out of duty or fear of the law. Verse 23 serves as the summary of Paul's basic message, that salvation is a gift that carries responsibility.

PASSAGE

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

DEFINING KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Wages – what the laborer was due at the end of his work day; Old Testament Law called for a daily wage to be paid to hired servants (Lev 19 :13); soldiers received a daily ration of food as their wage.

Sin – the expression of living independently of God and His laws; any act that is done in rebellion against God as Creator; missing the mark with God’s moral standards, which He has revealed in His Word as the target.

Death – the cessation of life; for humans, separation of the spirit with the body. Also portrayed as separation from God, spiritual death leads to eternal torment separated from God as opposed to the cessation of existence (annihilation).

Gift – something that is freely given without merit or work; the only requirement for possessing a free gift is receiving it.

God – as Creator and Judge, He set the moral standards in terms of obedience to Him. Since He has warned us through His revealed Word and His revealed Son, He is just in sentencing all sinners to eternity in Hell. However, He loves us and offers us justification.

Eternal life – This term points to both quantity and quality; the life offered by God is without end and is abundant, or full of His blessings, enjoying His presence forever.

Jesus Christ – the second member of the Trinity; the name “Jesus” points to Him being fully human (He was a real person) and the title “Christ” points to His deity (He was and is fully God at all times); He is the promised Messiah who delivered humanity from the curse of sin through His death, burial, and resurrection.

Our – points to a shared possession; the Lord followed by Paul is the same Lord followed by all who believe, creating unity within the church.

Lord – title of honor, dignity, and majesty; the One to whom someone gives allegiance based upon position and authority.

For Our Lesson

Our Problem (The wages of sin is death)

Sin. Just the mention of the word makes most of us flinch. We would rather call the act an indiscretion, a moral lapse, or an excusable part of who we are (“it is just the way I am”). Anything but SIN. The truth is we all sin. We may not be a murderer, but the Bible defines all sin as sin. Paul had already established this fact in Romans 1:18—3:20. As you read through this passage, you not only find the “big sins” but you also find acts that include disobeying parents, being unmerciful, and gossiping. Committing any of these acts, regardless of the degree, makes us a sinner.

Committing sin is only part of our problem. The other problem is the results of our sin. Paul referred to this result as the wages of sin. Notice in verse 6:13 that Paul used the phrase “instruments of unrighteousness.” The Greek word Paul used for “instrument” described the weapons carried by soldiers. Paul continued that metaphor when he pointed to the wages of sin. Soldiers of that day served with the expectation that they would receive a daily food ration. This daily ration was usually something they could eat with bread like fish or some other meat. One can only imagine the ramifications of failing to provide soldiers a daily wage.

In effect, Paul painted a picture of all humans being soldiers of sin who earned a daily ration of death. Each day, a little more death is earned. The next day carries the same promise, more death. What else could be so hopeless, knowing that the next day carries the same result? The appeal of sin is the empty promise of pleasure and self-power. Both are short lived. Solomon described the allure, the short-lived pleasure, and the eventual destructive results when teaching his sons about the dangers of sexual promiscuity (see Proverbs 7). He compared the end result to an ox being led to slaughter, taking an arrow in the midsection, and a bird getting caught in a trap (Prov. 7:22-23). Solomon concluded by stating that the ultimate result of sin is death.

Paul echoed the same sentiment as Solomon. Physical death is one result of sin. Prior to Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden, physical death was not a part of the human experience. That one act of disobedience in the Garden introduced physical death (see Romans 5:12). Barring the return of Christ, all of us will die as a consequence of our sin.

The other result of sin is spiritual death. This is the greater death. After we depart from our bodies our spirit continues to live. The Bible does not in any

way or form teach annihilation. Rather it teaches that once we die, we face judgment (see Hebrews 9:27). At that judgment, we either go to a place of eternal torment or we go to heaven (Matthew 25:46). There is no third option. This place of eternal torment is the ultimate separation from God. There is no hope of rescue or escape. This place awaits Satan, the angels who chose to rebel with him, and all who reject Christ.

Some may object to God sending people who have done mostly good things to a place characterized by evil. They are betting on God being lenient or looking the other way. The truth is we are all guilty and deserve spiritual death. Even on our best day, we do not meet the standard for heaven. Isaiah declared that even our best efforts are still as filthy rags when compared to the holiness of God (see Isaiah 64:6). The wrong question is being asked. The real question is how can the perfect and holy God have anything to do with humans who are flawed and in rebellion?




His Offer (but the gift of God is eternal life)

Paul contrasted the wages of sin (what is earned) with a gift that is free. The word translated gift has as its root the same Greek word we translate as “grace.” When we think of God’s gift of eternal life, we cannot separate it from His grace. As sinners, we do not deserve God’s favor. However, God has chosen to extend His favor to us through faith in His Son. We have not earned it, we can only receive it. That is grace.

Tertullian viewed this gift in terms of what the emperor gave to soldiers on New Year’s Day or a birthday. The gift was not a part of their salary nor was it expected. The soldier had already received his pay. It was humbly accepted by the soldier and the soldier was grateful to the emperor.

Paul declared this free gift to be eternal life. Eternal life is a common expression in Scripture. Both quantity and quality are included. When talking about eternal life, it is first and foremost without end. We have already noted that physical death is not the end of our existence. The Bible is clear that one possible outcome of the judgment we face after our physical death is spending eternity in heaven. One element of heaven is the banishment of death.

Beyond the never-ending duration is the quality of life. A person can live on



earth a long time and not have a quality life. This is not so with eternal life. Jesus declared that He came to give us an abundant life (John 10:10). This abundant life includes living with purpose while on earth, but it also includes living with purpose in eternity. While we do not fully know all we will do in heaven, we can be assured that it will be a rich experience filled with all God created us to be and do in the first place.

This gift of eternal life is dependent upon God. It is not ours to be earned, but it is His to give. Most of us have been disappointed somewhere along the way by someone we trusted. No matter how significant that person may have been in our lives, he or she had limits. This gift of eternal life comes from God and He is more than capable of delivering what He has promised. As Jesus faced His crucifixion, He reminded His disciples that if He left them He would return for them after He finished preparing a place for them in heaven (John 14:3). His keeping this promise is as sure as the power demonstrated in His resurrection.



The Source (through Jesus Christ our Lord)

Paul reminded His readers that the only way of securing this free gift is through faith in Jesus Christ. The people he was addressing were most likely from various religious backgrounds. Paul wanted to make sure there was no question as to the source of this eternal life. He did not want anyone to think that one needed Jesus plus something else or that there was another way to obtain this gift of eternal life. The only way was through Jesus.

Christianity is both inclusive and exclusive. It is inclusive in that the free gift of eternal life is available to anyone. Paul had already reminded the Romans that God was not partial in any way (Romans 2:11). He would go on to remind them later in his letter that whoever calls upon Jesus will secure this free gift (see Romans 10:13). Race, heritage, skills, amount of wealth (or lack of it), or our past failures do not disqualify us from receiving the gift.

That does not mean everyone will receive this free gift. Heaven is exclusive in that there is only one entrance. Jesus declared Himself to be the only Way to

the Father (see John 14:6). Eternal life is not bought, earned, or inherited. It is granted only to those who go through Jesus.

Some may think this is unfair, but Paul had already addressed this issue in his letter to the Romans. In chapters 1 and 2, he explained that God revealed Himself in nature and through natural law. All of us have been exposed to God in some form or fashion, yet we choose to deny Him. Paul stated that none of us have an excuse when we stand before God (see Romans 2:1). God is fair and just. We are the ones who have the problem, not Him.

Paul proclaimed Jesus Christ as being our Lord. This simple qualifier reminded the Romans that Paul was talking about a commitment of one's life. Lots of people had opinions about Jesus and His teachings. The Jewish religious leaders had even seen the empty tomb and refused to accept Him as the Messiah. They had all the facts but they were far from being followers of Christ. When someone is your lord they are more than a recognized force or great teacher. They are the one to whom you give allegiance, whom you trust for your very being, for whom you are willing to die if necessary. This is Jesus.

When I was a fifth grader, I answered all the questions asked of me just like I had been taught. Are you a sinner? Did Jesus die on the cross for your sin? Was Jesus raised from the dead? I was baptized and got a Bible saying I had been. However, it was not until I was in high school that I realized that Christianity was about following Jesus as Lord. I discovered that salvation is not about having the right beliefs or answers to the questions (as important as those things are). Rather, Christianity is about committing your life to Jesus and being willing to go, do, and be wherever and whatever He directs.

Pulling It Together

The Choice

Romans 6:23 implies that we choose whom we follow. The verse describes two very different paths. One leads to death and the other leads to eternal life. One is earned while the other is given. One requires no action—we are already a sinner—while the other requires us to turn to Jesus as Lord.

There are two commanders standing behind this passage. One is Satan who holds empty promises with short-lived results and eventual death. The other Commander is the Creator of the universe who holds eternal life and is extending it as a gift. Both are in a battle, looking for people to serve in their army. The choice is ours. Which do you choose?

Summarize

1. All humans have rebelled against God in some way (sin) and as a result will spend eternity separated from God.
2. God offers us eternal life with Him as a free gift.
3. We can only obtain this free gift by placing our trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

TAKE ACTION

- Pray for all the members of your Bible study group, asking God to help you share His Gospel with each individual.
- Write your personal testimony using the following format:
 - There was a time in my life when I was (describe your life prior to Jesus):
 - After I discovered Jesus, my life changed/became (describe your life after accepting Jesus):
 - Can I tell you what I discovered about Jesus that changed my life? I can share it with you using one verse, Romans 6:23. (My summary of Romans 6:23:_____)
- Create a prayer list that contains only the names of people who need to hear the Gospel. Begin to pray for this list regularly, asking God to open their eyes to Him.
- Join a community organization or participate in a community event with the intent of placing yourself in contact with non-Christians. Ask your group members to pray for you as you seek to share Christ through your service or participation.

Ideas For Leading Your Group Time

Focus Attention

As the group arrives, call attention to the “Sharing Christ?” section on the Learner Guide. Encourage them to fill in the blanks, recording the percentage they believe to be true for your church.

After most have arrived, share the following percentages: 80% felt they had a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Jesus with non-Christians; 39% have shared how to become a Christian with at least one person in the past 6 months; 52% have invited at least one person to church in the past 6 months; 20% rarely or never pray for people who are not professing Christians; 8% are hesitant to let others know they are Christians. (Source: *Transformational Discipleship Project*, LifeWay Research. You can take the same survey for a nominal fee by going to LifeWay.com/TDA and receive suggestions to foster your spiritual growth based on your responses.)

Lead the group to discuss their reaction to the research, comparing their response to the national average. Direct them to highlight the statistic about the number of people who have shared with at least one person in the past 6 months. Explain that during this study, the group will be challenged to use one verse (Romans 6:23) to share the Gospel with someone, becoming (or remaining) part of the 39%.

Option 1: As the group arrives, direct them to respond to the following question: What one Bible passage influenced you the most when you were considering Christianity?

Invite volunteers to share their response and how that passage impacted them. If not identified, suggest Romans 6:23 could be included in this list.

Present the “Share Jesus?” percentages printed above, allowing the group to record the numbers on their copy of the Learner Guide. Direct them to highlight the statistic about the number of people who have shared with at least one person in the past 6 months. Explain that during this study, the group will be challenged to use one verse (Romans 6:23) to share the Gospel with someone, becoming (or remaining) part of the 39%.

Option 2: As the group arrives, distribute a sheet of paper to every other person. Direct each person with a sheet of paper to work with someone who did not receive a sheet of paper to develop one sentence they could use to share the Gospel with a person.

Invite volunteers to share. Present the “Share Jesus?” percentages printed above, allowing the group to record the numbers on their copy of the Learner Guide. Direct them to highlight the statistic about the number of people who have shared with at least one person in the past 6 months. Explain that during this study, the group will be challenged to use one statement (Romans 6:23) to share the Gospel with someone, being (or remaining) part of the 39%.

Transition: Summarize the information in “Getting the Backstory” to set the biblical context. Emphasize that Paul was presenting a theological explanation of the basics of Christianity. Point out that near the middle of his letter, we find Romans 6:23.

Examine The Bible Together

Our Problem

On a markerboard or a larger sheet of paper, write the phrase “For the wages of sin is death.” Briefly summarize chapter 6, characterizing Romans 6:23 as a restating of Paul’s central message.

Lead the group to develop an expanded version of the phrase, recording the ideas shared on the markerboard or piece of paper. (Note: Use insights from the “Key Words” and “Our Problem” section to assist as needed.)

Emphasize that the word used for “wages” was the same word used for the daily rations provided to every soldier. Explain that every soldier received the same ration every day. Ask: How does the idea of everyone receiving the ration daily speak to the nature of sin’s wage?

To foster discussion when expanding the word sin, ask: How would you describe sin to a child? (included on Learner Guide). Record key words from the responses around the word “sin” on the markerboard or sheet of paper.

Highlight the word “death,” calling for volunteers to share the feelings evoked by the word. Use the comments in “Our Problem” to explain the two kinds of death referenced in the Bible. Record around the word “death” ways the group described death.

Option: Show a weekly time sheet used by an employer to record an employee’s hours worked. To illustrate the first phrase of Romans 6:23, write sin in every hourly box for one specific day. At the bottom of that day, write the word death. Explain that according to this verse the time sheet for everyone

who is without Christ would read this way. Ask: How have you seen sin lead to death? (on Learner Guide)



His Offer

On a marker board or on a second larger sheet of paper, write the phrase “but the gift of God is eternal life.”

Lead the group to compare the first two phrases of Romans 6:23, noting that wages and gift, sin and God, and death and eternal life are in parallel positions. Ask: How does each word offer a contrast to the other word in the same position?

Use information from “His Offer” to add insight as needed. Point out that eternal life includes both quantity and quality. Call for volunteers to suggest a symbol he or she might use to represent eternal life (question on Learner Guide). Remind the group of the feelings evoked by the word death. Ask: How do the feelings evoked by the thought of eternal life compare to the feelings evoked by the word death? Use the discussion to emphasize the superiority of God’s gift when compared to the wages of sin.

Option: Present a wrapped box. Ask: What is the best gift you ever gave someone? What made it a great gift?(on Learner Guide) Lead the group to discuss what makes God’s gift of eternal life so great. Emphasize the nature of God’s grace, the nature of eternal life, and that the gift is free.



The Source

On a markerboard or a third larger sheet of paper, write the phrase “through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Invite volunteers to call out Bible passages that come to mind when they see this third phrase of Romans 6:23. Record the passages, asking volunteers to explain how the verse they suggested relates to the phrase. If not included, add John 14:6 to the list. Highlight verses suggested that point to Jesus as being the only way to the Father.

Option: Display items that require or provide a means of gaining access (examples: remote car key, smartphone with pass code, tablet computer, bank account card, padlock). Direct the group to determine how the items displayed are related. If not guessed, explain that all the items require or provide access. Lead the group to compare the items displayed to Jesus being the only way to the Father.

Highlight the word “Lord.” Ask: What is the difference between believing a fact and putting your trust in that fact? (on Learner Guide) After allowing response, relay the testimony shared by the author of this lesson to illustrate the difference between knowing the facts about Jesus and committing your life to Jesus as Lord. Explain that the intent is not to cast doubt, but rather to challenge the group to examine their own commitment to Jesus.

Option: Preenlist a volunteer in the group who had a similar experience as the author. Ask them to share with the group, encouraging them to explain how they came to understand the difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus.



Summarize

Lead the group to develop a summary of the lesson utilizing the three phrases of Romans 6:23. Suggest the statements under Summarize in the commentary as a starting place. Invite the group to refine or suggest additional summary statements.

Explain that one more element is included in this passage, a choice. Emphasize that every person is given the opportunity to decide to receive or reject God’s gift. Remind them that the gift is accepted only by turning to Jesus in repentance and committing to follow Him as Lord. Lead the group to record their salvation testimony in the section provided in the Learner Guide. As an example, share your testimony using the pattern suggested on the guide. After allowing time for the group to record their testimonies, call on a volunteer to share.

Explain that the group could use this testimony format to initiate a conversation with someone else about Christ in the following way: My life before Jesus was..., After I discovered Jesus, my life changed/became... Can I tell you

what I discovered about Jesus that changed my life? I can share it with you using one Bible verse, Romans 6:23.

TAKE ACTION

- Offer to be available after the study is over to share with anyone who wants to know more about committing his or her life to Jesus. Explain that it would be a shame to talk about this passage and not give people the opportunity to accept God's gift if they have not already accepted it.
- Remind the group of the statistics shared at the beginning of the session. Challenge them to think of the names of three people they know who need to hear the Gospel message. Distribute index cards, giving two cards to each person present. Encourage them to record on both cards the names of at least three people who do not know Christ. Collect one card from each person and place the cards on a wall. Direct them to carry the other card with them so they can be reminded to pray for the people they listed. Soulwinning Commitment cards are also available through the BGCO (www.bgco.org/start).
- State that the only way we will have opportunities to share with someone about Christ is by being in contact with people who need to hear about Him. Challenge the group to find ways that they can be in contact with non-Christians and to look for ways of sharing with them. Share actions you are taking to place yourself in contact with non-Christians.
- Close the group with a time of prayer, focusing on the names of the people listed on the cards.

About the Writer

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