



What's the best reason to believe in the gospel? Is there a *best* way? Why are you a disciple of Jesus?

There is no cookie cutter, one-sized-fits-all approach to sharing the gospel (although there are common elements that should be present in each presentation). The “best” way to present the gospel is the way that best meets the specific needs of the hearers (both believers and unbelievers) that the gospel addresses. A quick survey of the sermons in the book of Acts will show a diversity in the apostles' gospel proclamation.

(Below are six motivations to believe in the gospel from Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City (114), Timothy Keller who has condensed an article by D.A. Carson (available here) that describes what Carson calls “Motivations to Appeal to in Our Hearers When We Preach for Conversion.” Ed. by Bryan Gilde)

1. Sometimes the appeal is to come to God out of fear of judgment and death.

Hebrews 2:14-18 speaks about Christ delivering us from the bondage of the fear of death. In Hebrews 10:31, we are told it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

*1 Timothy 5:20 says “Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.”

*Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 and Hebrews 9:27 speak of the *reality* of judgement. Often brought to the forefront of our minds when we attend a funeral.

2. Sometimes the appeal is to come to God out of a desire for release from the burdens of guilt and shame.

Galatians 3:10-12 tells us when we are under the curse of the law. Guilt is not only objective; it can also be a subjective inner burden on our consciences (Psalms 51). If we feel we have failed others or even our own standards, we can feel a general sense of shame and low self-worth. The Bible offers relief from these weights.

*1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. “

3. Sometimes the appeal is to come to God out of appreciation for the “attractiveness of **truth.”**

In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul states that the gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God. Yet, immediately after this statement, Paul argues that the wisdom of the cross is the consummate wisdom. Paul is reasoning here, appealing to the mind. He is showing people the inconsistencies in their thinking (e.g., “your culture’s wisdom is not wisdom by its own definition”). He holds up the truth for people to see its beauty and value, like a person holding up a diamond and calling people to admire it.

*Deuteronomy 6:5 & Matthew 10:28 say we should worship God with all of our being.

4. Sometimes the appeal is to come to God to satisfy unfulfilled existential longings.

To the woman at the well Jesus promised “living water” (John 4). This was obviously more than just eternal life—he was referring to an inner joy and satisfaction to be experienced now, something the woman had been seeking in men...



*Satisfied in God with Joy – Psalm 16:11 “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

Introduction to *The Confessions* of St. Augustine 400AD, North Africa

Great are You, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Your power, and of Your wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Your creation, desires to praise You, man, who bears about with him his mortality, the [witness](#) of his [sin](#), even the [witness](#) that You resist the [proud](#), — yet man, this part of Your creation, desires to praise You. **You move us to delight in praising You; for You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You.** Lord, teach me to [know](#) and understand which of these should be first, to call on You, or to praise You; and likewise to [know](#) You, or to call upon You. But who is there that calls upon You without [knowing](#) You? For he that [knows](#) You not may call upon You as other than You are. Or perhaps we call on You that we may [know](#) You. But “how shall they call on Him in whom they have not [believed](#)? Or how shall they [believe](#) without a preacher?” ([Romans 10:14](#)) And those who seek the Lord shall praise Him. For those who seek shall find Him ([Matthew 7:7](#)), and those who find Him shall praise Him. Let me seek You, Lord, in calling on You, and call on You in believing in You; for You have been preached unto us. O Lord, my [faith](#) calls on You—that [faith](#) which You have imparted to me, which You have breathed into me through the [incarnation](#) of Your Son, through the ministry of Your preacher.

5. **Sometimes the appeal is to come to God for help with a problem.**

There are many forms of what Carson calls “a despairing sense of need.” He points to the woman with the hemorrhage ([Matthew 9:20-21](#)), the two men with blindness ([Matthew 9:27](#)), and many others who go to Jesus first for help with practical, immediate needs. Their heart language is, “I’m stuck; I’m out of solutions for my problems. I need help for this!” The Bible shows that Jesus does not hesitate to give that help, but he also helps them see their sin and their need for rescue from eternal judgment as well (see [Mark 2:1-12](#); [Luke 17:11-19](#)).

*Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

6. **Lastly, the appeal is to come to God simply out of a desire to be loved. (Closely linked to #4)**

The person of Christ as depicted in the Gospels is a compellingly attractive person. His humility, tenderness, wisdom, and especially his love and grace draw people like a magnet. Dick Lucas, longtime pastor at St Helen’s Bishopsgate in London, has said that in the Bible God does not give us a watertight argument so much as a watertight *person* against whom, in the end, there can be no argument. There is an instinctive desire in all human beings to be loved. A clear depiction of Christ’s love can attract people to want a *relationship* with him. (John 3:16, I Corinthians 13, I John 4:10)

*John 13:34-36 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

*Jesus persistently told Peter to “feed my sheep” in John 21 because Jesus loved Peter.

*Romans 5:8 “But God **demonstrates** his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”