



two ways to live
know and tell the gospel

2Ways to live

1. God is the loving ruler of the world

The first point of the Christian message is that God is in charge of the world. He is the ruler, the supreme president, the king. Unlike human rulers, however, God always does what is best for his people. He is the kind of king you'd like to be ruled by.

God rules the world because he made the world. Like a potter with his clay, God fashioned the world into just the shape he wished, with all its amazing details. He made it, and he owns it.

He also made us. God created people who were something like himself, and put them in charge of the world—to rule it, to care for it, to be responsible for it, and to enjoy all its beauty and goodness. He appointed humanity to supervise and look after the world, but always under his own authority, honouring him and obeying his directions.

It all sounds rather ideal—God in heaven, people ruling the world according to his directions, and everything right with the world. But everything is very obviously not right—with us or the world.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.

Revelation chapter 4:11

2. We all reject God as the loving ruler by trying to run our lives our own way, without him.

The sad truth is that, from the very beginning, men and women everywhere have rejected God by doing things their own way. We all do this. We don't like someone telling us what to do or how to live—least of all God—and so we rebel against him in lots of different ways. We ignore him and just get on with our own lives; or we disobey his instructions for living in his world; or we shake our puny fists in his face and tell him to get lost.

No matter how we do it, we are all rebels, because we don't live God's way. We prefer to follow our own desires, and to run things our own way, without God. This rebellious, self-sufficient attitude is what the Bible calls 'sin'.

The trouble is, in rejecting God we make a mess not only of our own lives, but of our society and the world. In differing ways we all act like little 'gods', with our own crowns, competing with one another. The result is often misery. The suffering and injustice that we see around us all go back to our basic rebellion against God.

By rebelling against God, we've made a terrible mess of things. The question is: what will God do about it?

There is no-one righteous, not even one; there is no-one who understands, no-one who seeks God. All have turned away. Romans 3:10-12

3. God won't let us rebel forever

God cares enough about humanity to take our rebellion seriously. He calls us to account for our actions, because it matters to him that we treat him, and other people, so poorly. In other words, he won't let the rebellion go on forever.

The sentence God passes against us is entirely just, because he gives us exactly what we ask for. In rebelling against God, we are saying to him, "Go away. I don't want you telling me what to do. Leave me alone." And this is precisely what God does. His judgement on rebels is to withdraw from them, to cut them off from himself—permanently. But since God is the source of life and all good things, being cut off from him means death and hell. God's judgement against rebels is an everlasting, God-less death.

This is a terrible thing, to fall under the sentence of God's judgement. It is a prospect we all face, since we are all guilty of rebelling against God.

Is that it then? Are we all destined for death and everlasting ruin? If not for God's own miraculous intervention, we would be.

Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement. Hebrews 9:27

4. Because of His love, God sent Jesus Christ, His own Son, into the world. Jesus always lived under God's rule - no rebellion.

He died in our place, taking the punishment our rebellion deserves, and providing us with the pardon we need.

Because of his great love and generosity, God did not leave us to suffer the consequences of our foolish rebellion. He did something to save us. He sent his own divine son into our world to become a man—Jesus of Nazareth.

Unlike us, Jesus didn't rebel against God. He always lived under God's rule. He always did what God said, and so did not deserve death or punishment. Yet Jesus did die. Although he had the power of God to heal the sick, walk on water and even raise the dead, Jesus allowed himself to be executed on a cross. Why?

The Bible rings with the incredible news that Jesus died as a substitute for rebels like us. The debt that we owed God, Jesus paid by dying in our place. He took the full force of God's justice on himself, so that forgiveness and pardon might be available to us.

All this is quite undeserved by us. It is a generous gift, from start to finish.

Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. 1 Peter 3:18

5. God raised Jesus to life again as the ruler of the world.

God accepted Jesus' death as payment in full for our sins, and raised him from the dead. The risen Jesus is now what humanity was always meant to be: God's ruler of the world.

As God's ruler, Jesus has also been appointed God's judge of the world. The Bible promises that one day, he will return to call all of us to account for our actions.

In the meantime, Jesus offers us new life, both now and eternally. Now, our sins can be forgiven through Jesus' death, and we can make a fresh start with God, no longer as rebels but as friends. In this new life, God himself comes to live within us by his Spirit. We can experience the joy of a new relationship with God.

What's more, when we are pardoned through Jesus' death, we can be quite sure that when Jesus does return to judge, we will be acceptable to him. The risen Jesus will give us eternal life, not because we have earned it, but because he has died in our place.

Well, where does all that leave us? It leaves us with a choice of only two ways to live.

*In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
1 Peter 1:3*

6. The two ways to live ...

A. Our Way

- reject the Ruler - God
- try to run my life, rely on myself
- face God's judgement

B. God's new way

- Submit to Jesus as ruler
- rely on Jesus death and resurrection
- receive God's gift of eternal life

We can continue in our rebellion against God, and try to run our lives our own way without him. Sadly, this is the option that many people persist in.

The end result is that God gives us what we ask for and deserve. He condemns us for our rejection of his rightful rule over our lives. We not only have to put up with the messy consequences of rejecting God here and now, but we face the dreadful prospect of an eternity of separation from him, without life or love or relationship.

For those of us who have realised that our situation is hopeless, there is a lifeline. If we turn back to God and appeal for mercy, trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection, then everything changes.

For a start, God wipes our slate clean. He accepts Jesus' death as payment for our sins, and freely and completely forgives us. He pours his own Spirit into our hearts and grants us a new life that stretches past death and into forever. We are no longer rebels, but part of God's own family as his adopted sons and daughters. We now live with Jesus as our ruler.

The two ways to live could not be more different, and they present you, the reader, with some choices. Which one represents the way you want to live?

*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.
John 3:36*

Knowing the Gospel

To start the discussion, talk about your reactions to the following statement: *"The gospel isn't about intellectual content; it's about each individual's personal relationship with God."*

Now read the following passages:

1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Colossians 2:6-7; 2 Timothy 3:14-15

How do these passages show that the gospel of Christ is taught or learnt?

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Colossians 2:6-7

2 Timothy 3:14-15

What do these passages reveal about the content of the gospel message?

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Colossians 2:6-7

2 Timothy 3:14-15

Do you think the creation is a good place to start an explanation of the gospel? Why?

Read through Acts 17:16-30 for an example of Paul's presentation of the gospel.

How do you explain (understand) sin? Is the way it is presented in section 2 of the outline helpful? How might you express it?

Please use your Bible to support your suggestions and any changes.

The presentation ends with a very pointed question: which way do you want to live? Do you find this challenge helpful? What alternative(s) might there be?