
How to Hear the Gospel

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The purpose of this homework assignment is to take the principles of Horatius Bonar's sermon and make specific, concrete applications in your life.

1. Read the sermon, "Believe Just Now." Read it again—slowly, thoughtfully, prayerfully.

What is the main message of the sermon? Put it in one sentence that begins,

God wants me to_____.

2. Listen to how directly Jesus and the apostles call you to faith.

Jesus said to the curious but grumbling crowds: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe...I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." (John 6:35-36,51).

Paul answered the trembling jailer: "Believe in the Lord Jesus" (Acts 16:31).

Paul spoke to the skeptical Athenians: "Now He commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed. Of this He has given assurance to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31).

How should you now respond? Where do you need to take new, fresh steps of faith in Jesus Christ?

3. Bonar said, "Unbelief is, in reality, belief of a lie. Yes, God commands you to believe; and your not believing is your worst sin."

What are ways in which unbelief shows itself in your everyday living?

For example, "I try to believe and I pray for more faith, but I just can't."

For example, "God must hate me because _____, so what's the use?"

For example, "I know in my head that God says He is good and is in control, but I just can't believe it in my heart because _____."

What are your examples of such "sincere" and "earnest" unbelief?

Do you tend to view your unbelief as the unfortunate wallowings of a helpless victim who has tried?

Do you now see that this struggling, self-pitying, self-excusing, "earnest" unbelief is your greatest sin?

4. What is *God's* purpose in speaking to *you* in this message by Bonar?

True beliefs to embrace: God wants me to believe

False beliefs to forsake: God wants me not to believe

Wise actions to put on: God wants me to do

Foolish actions to put off: God wants me not to do

5. Read prayerfully and meditatively Bonar's wonderful Gospel hymn, "Not What My Hands Have Done:"

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| <p>1. <i>Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul;
Not what my toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole.
Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God;
Not all my prayers and sighs and tears can bear my awful load.</i></p> <p>2. <i>Thy work alone, O Christ, can ease this weight of sin;
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, can give me peace within.
Thy love to me, O God, not mine, O Lord, to thee,
Can rid me of this dark unrest, and set my spirit free.</i></p> <p>3. <i>Thy grace alone, O God, to me can pardon speak;
Thy pow'r alone, O Son of God, can this sore bondage break.</i></p> | <p><i>No other work, save thine, no other blood will do;
No strength, save that which is divine, can bear me safely through.</i></p> <p>4. <i>I bless the Christ of God; I rest on love divine;
And with unfalt'ring lip and heart, I call this Saviour mine.
His cross dispels each doubt; I bury in his tomb
Each thought of unbelief and fear, Each ling'ring shade of gloom.</i></p> <p>5. <i>I praise the God of grace; I trust His truth and might;
He calls me his, I call Him mine, my God, my joy, my light.
'Tis He who saveth me, and freely pardon gives;
I love because He loveth me, I live because He lives.</i></p> |
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Verse 1: Where do you needlessly toil or become trapped in what you feel and do? Notice how Bonar argues with his own tendency to become tangled within himself. How does your tangle affect your relationship with God?

your relationship with other people?

your inward sense of who you are?

Verses 2 and 3: What is the good news that Bonar embraces? Notice how many times he directly and personally addresses God as he reaches out to embrace what is true.

Verses 4 and 5: How does he respond now to God? Notice how confidence and ringing joy replace the dark unrest of the first three stanzas. How can you bury your doubts, unbelief, fear and gloom?

Come now to God in truth. First make this hymn your meditation. Then make it your prayer of commitment. Then make it your song of praise!

Bonar's contemporary, Robert McCheyne, spoke with an inquirer who struggled to understand faith and was filled with turmoil and confusion. McCheyne, like Bonar, said there was only one answer to this struggle: "Believe what the Bible says about Jesus."

Believe what the Bible says about Jesus. Believe just now!