ANKYRA

The Gospel, Given to You Straight

The whole thing, in four parts. Learn it well enough to say it in your own words.

If a friend asked you tonight what Christians actually believe, could you tell them in a minute without panicking? Most people who have been in church for years could not. Here it is, in four parts, in order.

1 **God made it, and it is his**

God made everything, including you. He is good, and he is rightly in charge. Life works his way because he is the one who designed it. Nothing here starts with us.

Genesis 1:1 · Revelation 4:11

2 **We took over**

Every one of us has pushed him off the throne and run our own lives instead. That is what the Bible means by sin: not a list of misdeeds but a direction of travel. It breaks the relationship we were made for, and what it leads to is death.

Romans 3:23 · Isaiah 59:2 · Romans 6:23

3 **Jesus stepped in**

God did not leave it there. He came himself. Jesus lived the life none of us manage, and at the cross took the death we had coming. Three days later he walked out of the grave: God's own evidence that it worked and that death is beaten.

Mark 10:45 · 1 Peter 3:18 · 1 Corinthians 15:3–4

4 **So turn round, and trust him**

Not try harder. Not be more religious. Turn round, which the Bible calls repentance, and trust him, which it calls faith. It is a gift and it cannot be earned, which is the only reason any of us stand a chance.

Mark 1:15 · Romans 10:9 · Ephesians 2:8–9

> **And then what?**
>
> You are forgiven: completely, not conditionally. You are adopted into God's family. You are given his Spirit to change you from the inside, and his people to do it alongside. Life does not become easy. It becomes yours for the first time.
>
> John 1:12 · Romans 8:1

Saying it in a minute

PLAIN WORDS, NO JARGON

Do not learn a script. Learn the four parts, then say them how you actually talk. Something like this:

> "Basically, I reckon there's a God, and he made all this, including us. And I think everyone, me included, lives like he isn't there and does what they want, and that's what wrecks things. So God came here himself, as Jesus. He lived the life none of us manage, then took the punishment we had coming, on a cross. And then he came back from the dead. The offer is that if you turn round and trust him, you're forgiven: not because you've earned it, because you can't. That's it, really."

Say it out loud until it stops sounding like a recital, then keep the four parts and throw the wording away.

Four things not to say

COMMON, AND COSTLY

Do not promise that life gets easier. It does not, and they will find out. Jesus said the opposite and was honest about it from the start.

Do not make it about being a better person. That is very nearly the reverse of the message. The whole point is that we could not manage it.

Do not pretend you have all the answers. You do not, and it shows. Unearned confidence is easy to spot.

Do not argue to win. Nobody has ever been argued into the kingdom of God. You can win every point and lose the person.

When you get stuck

WHICH WILL HAPPEN

- **"I don't know" is a real answer.** Better than a made-up one, and "I'll find out and tell you" gives you a reason to speak to them again.
- **Your own story needs no qualifications.** You need not be an expert in anything except what happened to you. Nobody can argue with it, and nobody else can tell it.
- **An invitation beats an argument.** "Come to church with me on Sunday" has done more good than any debate ever won.

You are not the one who changes anybody: that was never your job. Yours is to be honest, available, and clear about what you believe.

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