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THE COMPASS

## CLASSIC ILLUSTRATIONS FOR CLARIFYING THE GOSPEL

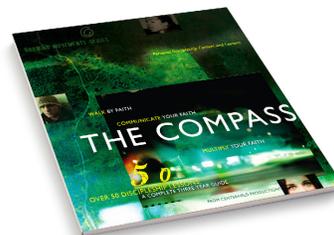
### THE COMPASS DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM

The Compass delivers an easy-to-follow discipleship curriculum, providing lesson plans on core biblical messages as well as basic ministry skills. You could look at The Compass as basic Follow-up appointments, 6-50.

The CD contains over 40 lessons to help prepare you for weekly appointments with your disciples. The curriculum is organized into 3 levels: Walk by Faith, Communicate Your Faith, and Multiply Your Faith.

Topics Include: Community, Prayer, Position in Christ, Assurance of Salvation, Sharing the Gospel, Filling of the Spirit, Confession, Obedience, Sanctification, Eternal Perspective, Justification by Faith, Spiritual Multiplication, How to Share the Ministry of the H.S., How to Conduct Basic Follow-up, God's Will, Scripture Memory, Time Management, and Sharing Your Testimony.

We've also included a number of additional resources. Not the least of which is a series of talks by Roger Hershey on discipleship.



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## DO VS. DONE

This analogy comes from the book *Becoming a Contagious Christian* by Bill Hybels. A good way to distinguish Christianity from all other religions, religion in general, as well as emphasize Christ's death for our sin is the analogy of "do vs. done." It goes like this:

*I like to think of the difference between Christianity and religion as the difference between do vs. done. Religion is about following lists of do's and don't's. Religion is about what we can do for God to be good enough to get into heaven.*

*But the problem is that you never know when you've done enough. It's like being a salesman that knows he must make a quota but never being told what it is.*

*Christianity is about what God has been done for us. God did for us what we could have never done for ourselves. He lived the perfect life we could never live, and Jesus died on the cross to pay for all of the wrongs we've committed, or ever will.*

*To become a real Christian is to humbly receive God's gift of forgiveness and to commit to following his leadership. When we do that, He adopts us into his family, and begins to change us from the inside out.*

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## THE JUDGE ILLUSTRATION

This is a classic illustration we use all the time to clarify substitutionary atonement. The crucial idea is that God is both **just** and **loving**. Those two attributes would seem to be in conflict when it comes to dealing with sinful people. But at the cross they each reach their fullest expression without compromise. Build and heighten the tension between his love and his justice and then show how God solves this “dilemma.”

*Do you know why Jesus had to die? Let me tell you a story that night help make it clear.*

*Do you have a car?*

*Well, let's say you are driving home this weekend and you are cruising. You're going say, 105 mph. You're just flying. You get busted, the cop has you on radar and you're done. They impound your car, and bring you straight to the courthouse to face the judge.*

*Well the good news is that the county you got busted in just happens to be the county in which your dad is the judge. So you're thinking that you're golden. **He loves you**, he'll let you off, everything will be fine.*

*But just as you are entering the courthouse, you remember that your dad is a really good judge. He never punishes the innocent. He always punishes the guilty. **He is a good and just judge.***

*Now you're a little nervous. Which is going to win out, his love or his justice. He's your dad and he loves you so he'll want to do good to you. But he's just, he's a good judge and therefore he'll want to follow the law and render a just verdict.*

*What do you think he'd do? Which would win, love or justice?*

*[Let them respond]*

*It's hard to know what he might do. Let me walk you through a scenario that shows how he might solve the dilemma.*

*You stand before your dad the judge and he says to you, “Son, this officer says you were going 50 mph over the speed limit. How do you plead.”*

*What would so you say?*

*[Guilty]*

*Yeah, that's a good idea, cause you're guilty.*

*So he look at you and says, “That will be \$500 or a week in jail. Guilty as charged.” And he bangs down the gavel.*

*Well you don't have any money, so the bailiff comes to take you away so you can start serving your time, when your dad, the judge stands up and says, “Wait a minute, bring him back here.” Then he stands up, takes off his robe and walks down from behind the bench. Then he reaches into his coat pocket, takes out his checkbook and writes the court a check for \$500, the exact amount of your fine. Then he offers it to you.*

*What going on here is this. He is just, so he declares you guilty, since you are. And he demands that a penalty be paid. But he loves you, and so he has determined to pay that penalty himself, on your behalf.*

*Now as he stands there offering you the check, what do you need to do?*

*[Accept or reject it]*

*That's right. You can accept his payment on your behalf, or for whatever reason you can reject it.*

*Okay, now roll back the tape. That story is I think, a great picture of what God does for us. If there are two things primarily true about God they are that he is **loving** and he is **just**. He loves you, he always has. He cannot love you more and will not love you less. He loves you. And he is just. He always renders a just verdict. He always does the right thing.*

*Those two things put him in an interesting situation when it comes to us, because every one of us has broken his laws. We are guilty before him. So which would win out? His love, which would want to let us off, or his justice that demands a penalty be paid?*

*The Bible says that he declared us guilty, because we are, and demanded that a penalty be paid. Then he left heaven, came to earth, became a man, and died to pay our penalty. See, we didn't owe a \$500 penalty, so he didn't just write a check. The Bible says that sin earns us a death penalty, so he died to pay that.*

*Then he comes to us to offer his life on our behalf. Just like your dad with the check he stands before you and says, "I'll take the blame for every rotten thing you've ever done, and give you credit, for my perfect life. All you need to do is accept it."*

*Does that make sense?*

*Have you ever come to the point where you accepted his death on your behalf- That substitutionary payment?*

*Would you like to now?*

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## FROZEN LAKE

If you are sharing your faith on a regular basis, you will encounter the person who is somewhat ready to make a decision but has a question related to the amount of faith required. I say “somewhat ready” because the basis of this question can be legitimate but it can also flow from a person’s desire to avoid making a commitment.

I was driving behind a car, that by the looks of it was owned by the president of the National Rifle Association—decals of deer within bulls eyes, insured by Smith and Wesson, etc. On the back was a military bumper sticker reading with the heinous, but rather amusing, saying, “kill them all, let God sort them out.” In the end we don’t know a person’s motives, God will have to sort that out, our job is to answer, to the best of our ability, the questions.

The question here, specifically, is, “But what if I don’t have enough faith.” They have understood the issue that eternal life is not attained through good works, that it is accomplished by Christ, and that we must receive this gift by faith, ergo the question, “what if I don’t have enough faith.” To which I respond with this analogy.

*It’s winter and you live in the arctic, or worse Minnesota. Before you is a glorious lake frozen over. It’s been 20 below zero and there isn’t a doubt in your mind that the ice will hold you. So, you go running down the dock and jump out onto the ice. You, however, were wrong. You had a ton of faith but the object of your faith, it turns out, was a 1/8 inch film of ice on the pond.*

*A week goes by, your pneumonia has cleared up and once again you are looking out on a frozen lake. But it’s been warm and your socks are still wet from your last miscalculation, so with great fear, timidity and very little faith you inch your way out onto the ice. It holds you. It turns out the ice is two feet thick. This time you had only a tiny bit of faith but the object of your faith was trustworthy, it was two feet thick.*

*The issue is really not the amount of faith, it is the object of our faith (which is Christ) and whether we are willing to take whatever amount of faith we have and place it in him. Even filled with doubt, you can step out on the ice.*

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ILLUSTRATIONS

## FAITH OVER NIAGARA FALLS

Sometimes there is a need to clarify that becoming a Christian is not simply intellectual assent to the gospel message. Technically, Satan could affirm its truthfulness and accuracy.

So the story of the great tightrope walker “Blondin” has been employed as an analogy over the last three decades of evangelism to demonstrate that faith involves the active component of trust. Here’s the story:

*The great tightrope walker Blondin strung a wire from one side of the Niagara Falls to the other. A crowd gathered to watch him attempt to walk out over the deadly falls. The silent tension turned to cheers as they watched him walk out, turn and come back.*

*He asked the crowd, “How many believe that I can walk to the other side and back while pushing a wheelbarrow?” To which they shouted, “We believe, we believe!” And, Blondin did in fact walk out and back with a wheelbarrow.*

*Upon his return, Blondin asked, “Who believes I could push a man in this wheelbarrow while walking out and back on the wire?” Again the crowd responded with enthusiastic affirmation.*

*“OK,” he asked, “Who would like to get in?” The crowd fell silent.*

*Trusting Christ is not simply assenting to the facts of the gospel message, there is a decision that implies actually getting into the wheelbarrow.*

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## THE INDIAN CHIEF

This is similar to the Judge Illustration. It seeks to draw into sharp relief God's *love* and his *justice* and show the tension between the two. Only because of the cross is he able to be "just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." As in the judge illustration you want to heighten awareness of those two attributes, love and justice, and show how both are satisfied by Jesus' death.

It is slightly stronger than the judge illustration in that the punishment is physical and thus more consistent with the cross. It is weaker in as much it's entirely in the third person and not personalizable. Not that "personalizable" is actually a word. Anyway, here's the script:

*Do you know why Jesus had to die? Can I tell you a story that might help make it clear?*

*There is a story told about a particular Indian tribe who was suffering from the affects of a severe drought. Food was scarce and the members of the tribe were beginning to steal from each other in order to survive.*

*Well the chief knew that that would be the death of the tribe so he issued a law that the next person caught stealing would be taken to the center of the village, tied to a pole and publicly whipped.*

*The next day, sure enough a thief was caught. Everyone turned up to see who it was and to witness the punishment. To everyone's shock, the thief turned out to be the Chief's own mom. What was he going to do. He was a good chief, and could not justly ignore the law he had made the day before. He had to be just.*

*But good grief, this was his mom. She was old, and frail, the beating could very well kill her. And he loved her. How could he cause her to suffer?*

*What do you think he should do? Which should win: His love or his justice?*

*Well, here's what he does. He orders that her wrists be tied to the pole so the beating can begin. And he calls the punisher to step forward, whip in hand.*

*But before he gives the order to commence, he steps in between his mom and the punisher. He stretches his broad shoulders across her frail back and with her body completely protected underneath his own, orders that the punishment be carried out.*

*As the cords of the whip fall, they fall on him, and he absorbs the full brunt of her penalty. In that act he was both just, in carrying out the penalty, and loving, by suffering it himself.*

*That is what Jesus did for us. We are guilty of breaking his laws, and we know it. Everyone of us has a list of things we are ashamed of, and things that we can't stop doing even though we know it's wrong. The Bible is clear that sin earns a penalty and that God is just. The penalty must be paid. But it's also clear that God loves us. He wants good things for us. He doesn't want us to be punished.*

*So here's what he did. He declared us guilty and order that the penalty be paid. Then he came to earth, became a man, and hung on a cross for us. When Jesus was being crucified, what he was doing was stepping in between us who are guilty, and God the Father who demanded justice. He absorbed the blows of that punishment so we wouldn't have to.*

*Does that make sense?*

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## HOW DEATH SHOWS LOVE

The following illustration seeks to inject meaning into what is for many an empty phrase: “Jesus died to show that he loved us.” Almost everyone would agree with that, but few have thought through what the heck it means. With a simple guided conversation you can explain what it means and leave people faced with the unavoidable conclusion that they are in grave danger. Ultimately you are just walking them through a simple syllogism:

Jesus’ death shows he loves us.  
Death only shows love when the beloved is in grave danger  
Therefore, we are in grave danger.

Most would grant the first premise with no argument at all. You can easily show them that they already know the second premise is true. If both premises are true (and they will likely agree), and the form of the argument is sound (it is) the conclusion must be accurate.

Here’s how it works:

*Do you know why Jesus had to die? What was the point of his death?*

*[Don’t know, pay for our sins, show he loves us]*

*Growing up I always heard that Jesus died to show how much he loved us. Have you ever heard that?*

*The problem was I had no idea what it meant. I always wondered how does his death show love?*

*Let me try to flesh that out for you. Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend/mom?*

*Do you love her?*

*Let’s say you want to show her the full extent of your love so you go to visit her this weekend and you tell her, “I love you. But I want to show you how much.” Then you take out a gun, put it in your mouth, and blow your head apart. What is she thinking at this point?*

*[You’re a complete psycho.]*

*Yes, that doesn’t show love, it shows insanity. So rewrite the script. Give me a scenario in which you could die on purpose, but it would really show love for your girlfriend.*

*[She’s about to get hit by a car, you jump in the way push her to safety and get hit. There’s a bad guy, you fight him to rescue her and die in the process. Burning building, drowning in ocean, etc.]*

*We could come up with a hundred different scenarios, but the consistent thing in each of them would be that in each case in order for your death to show love, not insanity, your girlfriend would have to be in some sort of danger.*

*It seems that the principal is, that death only shows love when the beloved is in grave danger. Does that make sense?*

*So, let’s get back to what was going on when Jesus died.*

*If death only shows love when the beloved is in grave danger, and Jesus, death does show love, What must that mean about our predicament?*

*[We are in danger]*

*What are we in danger of? What was the train that he was jumping in front of?*

*[Sin, death, judgment from God, hell]*

At this point you can transition to the whole gospel, or move on to another illustration. This whole thing also works well as a clarification for Romans 5:8 when going through the Four Laws.

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## LORD, LIAR, LUNATIC

When you're sharing the gospel it's pretty important that you be able to make a compelling case that Jesus is God. C.S. Lewis' "Trilemma" is a brilliant way to do this. It helps to make a simple sketch as you go for this one. It's a very simple, but powerful argument:

*Let me show you a real simple way to evaluate the claims Jesus made about himself. Chiefly, and most preposterously, he claimed to be God. (Write "Jesus is God" at the top of the paper.)*

*There are really only two logical possibilities about that statement- either it's true or it's not true. (Draw two lines coming from "Jesus is God." At the end of one write "True." At the end of the other write "False.")*

*Now if it's true, then he really is God, and we ought to worship him accordingly. He is the Lord of everything. (Draw a line coming down from "True" and write "Lord.") But if it's false, then there two options. Any idea what they are?*

[Response.]

*If Jesus' claim to be God is false, the two options are that either he knew it or he didn't. (Draw two lines coming out from "False." At the end of one write "He knew it," at the end of the other write, "He didn't know.")*

*Look at that first option. If he claimed to be God, but he wasn't, and he knew he wasn't, what does that make him?*

[A liar.]

*That's right. He has pulled off the greatest scam the world has ever seen. For thousands of years, millions have lived and died for a charlatan. Christianity is a huge hoax. (Draw a line coming down from "He knew it" and write "Liar.")*

*Look at the other option. If Jesus claimed to be God, wasn't God, but genuinely thought he was, what does that make him?*

[A lunatic.]

*That's right, he's a psycho. Think about it. If your roommate thinks she's smarter than you, she's kind of arrogant. If she thinks she's the smartest person at school, she's really out there. If she thinks she's the greatest mind ever to walk the earth, she's delusional. As her perceptions become more grandiose, and more divorced from reality, the more you're forced to conclude she's insane. And if Jesus really thought he was the God who made heaven and earth, but he was just an ordinary Jewish carpenter, then he was a loon. (Draw a line coming down from "He didn't know" and write "Lunatic.")*

*Logically, then there are only three possibilities for Jesus' identity: He was either God, like he said, a liar who has scammed the world, or a raving lunatic.*

*There's a fourth option that people prefer because it makes him nice and safe. It's that he was a just a good teacher. Just a nice, moral man. But that's not possible. Insane people don't make particularly good teachers, and it would be hard to call the greatest scam artist "moral." You need to evaluate his claims honestly and take him as he is, not invent some fourth option fantasy because it's more comfortable. Who do you think he was? Lord, Liar, or Lunatic?*

