

2

UNSTOPPABLE MESSAGE



What often gets you sidetracked during the day?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLunstopable

THE POINT

*Jesus died for our sins, rose again,
and reigns as Lord.*



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Do you know the original mission statement of Harvard University?

“Let every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and ... seeing the Lord only giveth wisdom, let every one seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seek it of him (Prov. 2:3).”

Surprised? When the school was founded in 1636, the administration hired only Christian professors, the formation of Christian character was a top priority for students, and ministers were trained and equipped to share the gospel.

Today, Harvard maintains a legacy of academic excellence, but has lost its original mission—a phenomenon often described as “mission drift.” The university lost sight of its original purpose.¹

Unfortunately, mission drift happens in the church, as well. As we’ll see in Acts 2, there is a clear, unstoppable message that drives our mission. It’s up to us to stay the course.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Acts 2:22-24

²²“Men of Israel, listen to these words: This Jesus the Nazarene was a man pointed out to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through Him, just as you yourselves know. ²³ Though He was delivered up according to God’s determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail Him to a cross and kill Him. ²⁴ God raised Him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it.”

Peter spoke of “God’s determined plan,” yet “lawless people” killed Jesus. In other words, God was in control, but the men involved were held responsible for their deeds. Peter stated these two truths together, unflinchingly and without apology.

As for human responsibility, we can never grasp the meaning of the cross until we understand the depth of our sin and how it separates us from God. Along with the lawless men who crucified Jesus, *we all are responsible for Jesus’ death*. Once we see ourselves as sinners in need of salvation, we can understand why there had to be a cross—why the cross is vital to our message.

But Jesus didn’t merely die; He rose again. If Jesus had sacrificed His life for us and then remained dead, His would be a poignant story about a martyr. But Jesus is unique in all of history. He is the only person who ever lived, died, and returned to life—never to die again.

Jesus’ death and resurrection are the heartbeat of the gospel message.

What can we learn from Peter’s approach to sharing the gospel?

QUESTION #2

Acts 2:32-33,36

³²“God has resurrected this Jesus. We are all witnesses of this. ³³ Therefore, since He has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, He has poured out what you both see and hear.” ... ³⁶“Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!”

In A.D. 186, Polycarp, a church leader in Smyrna, stood before the Roman authorities and faced a decision. He could proclaim Caesar as lord and live, or he could refuse and die a martyr. For Polycarp, there was no other lord but Jesus. The proconsul weighed Polycarp’s fate and urged him, “Swear, and I will release thee—reproach Christ.”

But Polycarp held fast: “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, who hath saved me?” With that confession, Polycarp was burned alive and pierced with a sword. He died for professing his belief that Jesus alone is Lord.²

When the Romans called Caesar *kurios*, or “Lord,” they were using that term in its highest sense: to signify divinity. They were acknowledging the emperor as their god, since the title denoted absolute sovereignty.

Peter used the same term at the climax of his sermon in Acts 2:36 to describe the absolute sovereignty of Jesus Christ: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!” In this sense, *Lord* is a majestic title, used to show God’s sovereignty and divine power. The word points to the Deity of Jesus; Peter was declaring Jesus is God.

What are the personal implications of recognizing Jesus as Lord?

QUESTION #3

Jesus “has been exalted to the right hand of God.” With the Father, He sits in the most authoritative, sovereign position in the universe. It’s because Jesus holds this most exalted position that He had the authority to pour out the Holy Spirit along with the signs and wonders people witnessed that day.

Because Jesus is Lord and Messiah:

- ▶ **He is worthy of our worship.** He’s not only worthy of our respect, but also of our worship. He is the One before whom every knee one day will bow (see Phil. 2:10-11).
- ▶ **He is worthy of our obedience.** Because Jesus is Lord and Messiah, He deserves to be sovereign in our lives. He has the absolute right to tell us what to do and expect our complete obedience.

What are the worldwide implications of Jesus’ role as Lord?

QUESTION #4



Acts 2:37-38

³⁷ When they heard this, they came under deep conviction and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: “Brothers, what must we do?” ³⁸ “Repent,” Peter said to them, “and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Peter’s sermon had a devastating impact on his hearers. In the original Greek, Luke’s words mean they were “cut to the heart.” These people were suffering and sorrowing over the sin of having rejected and crucified the Messiah. They were filled with anguish and horror over what they had done.

The goal of biblical preaching is not to make people feel guilty or condemned, but to open their hearts to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Here’s why:

- ▶ **Condemnation** brings a general feeling of worthlessness, like a wet blanket. Condemnation leaves you feeling powerless and immobilized, totally discouraged from changing.
- ▶ **Conviction** brings awareness of specific sins, attitudes, and habits in your life that need to be changed. It’s a specific spotlight on areas in need of care. When the Holy Spirit convicts you, He does so with the loving desire that you turn from sin and turn to Christ.

When the people asked, “What must we do?” Peter was poised and ready with a call to action: “Repent . . . and be baptized.” The word “repent” in the Greek language means to change the way you think about your life and your behavior. It means agreeing that God is right and you are wrong. In essence, Peter told his listeners to repent and reverse the course of their lives.

Notice that baptism is a part of repentance. Peter was calling the crowd to be baptized *because* their sins had been forgiven. That’s the unstoppable message: Jesus is Lord and Christ, and when we acknowledge Him and turn from our sin, we are forgiven.

As we share the gospel, how can we work toward the goal of conviction rather than condemnation?

QUESTION #5

JESUS IS LORD

Use the space below to record words, phrases, or images that come to mind when you think of the word "Lord."

What are some practical steps you take to approach Jesus as Lord in your own life?

"If Jesus were born one thousand times in Bethlehem and not in me, then I would still be lost!"

—CORRIE TEN BOOM

LIVE IT OUT

How will the unstoppable message of the gospel influence your life this week? Consider the following options:

- ▶ **Praise Him.** Jesus is worthy of our worship; therefore, set aside a time this week to praise Him in a way that is meaningful to you.
- ▶ **Share.** The message of salvation is for all Christians to share. Pray for opportunities to share the message of Jesus in your everyday conversations. Plan to tell someone this week about the difference Jesus has made in your life.
- ▶ **Invite others.** As you worship Jesus and share the truth of the gospel this week, invite others to join you. Find someone who needs a spiritually mature example and encourage him or her to join with you in following Jesus.

Let's avoid the dangers of "mission drift," both in our lives and in our churches. Let's not forget that the message of Jesus Christ and His salvation is the reason for everything we do.

My thoughts



1. Peter Greer and Chris Horst, *Mission Drift* (Bethany House, 2014), 17.
2. <http://www.ccel.org/f/foxe/martyrs/fox102.htm>.

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLunstoppable**