

24 Ways to Explain
the
Gospel



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Some concepts and ideas in the Bible are difficult to express in words. Things like love, forgiveness, sin, and others are very abstract and complex. Metaphors make abstract concepts easier to understand. By using common experiences—such as gardening, becoming ill, joining a family, becoming a citizen, or having debt—metaphors allow people to connect with the concepts at a personal level.



The gospel is about the good news of Jesus: Jesus has come to save us. It is important to explore, learn, appropriate, and use the illustrations the Bible itself uses to explain what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

What does “salvation” mean? How does the Bible explain it? How do we explain it to others? The following pages list twenty four illustrations of salvation in the Bible.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast
—Ephesians 2:8–9

A **metaphor** is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase, literally denoting one kind of object or idea, is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them.

An **illustration** is an example or instance that helps explain and make something clear.

Removing the Veil

The Bible is God’s revelation to humans (2 Tim. 3:16). That means that in the Bible we meet and get to know who God is and what he has done. Revelation means that something hidden is unveiled so it is open to be seen. We can only know God if he lifts the veil from our eyes so we can know him and his actions.

- The Lord Jesus spoke about “the secrets of the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:10). The Apostle Paul wrote about the mysteries God revealed to us in Jesus (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 1:9; 3:6; Col. 1:26).
- These secrets and mysteries are now revealed in the Scriptures. However, not all mysteries are revealed (Deut. 29:29). God lifted the veil far enough to let us see: who God is, what he has done in history, Jesus’ work of salvation, and our need for that salvation.

Metaphor	BIOLOGY	Jesus promises us a new and abundant life (John 10:10).
Positive	LIFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abundant life (John 5:24–26) • Bread of life (John 6:35) • God wants us to be fruitful (John 15:8; Col. 1:10).
Negative	DEATH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deserving death (Rom. 1:32) • Death through Adam (Rom. 5:12–14) • Sin causes lack of fruit (Gen. 3:16–19; Luke 3:9; John 15:2).
Illustrations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death is a human reality. But Jesus offers life, eternal life. • As a metaphor, death represents the end of all possibilities and hope. People live as if they were dead, without hope and separated from God. • Jesus offers abundant life. Jesus offers a new opportunity to live life like God intended it from the beginning. • Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11). Besides being a miracle, it also illustrates what Jesus can and does for people: He gives new life. • As we receive new life, God wants us to be fruitful and share this new life with the people around us.

Metaphor	HUMAN DEVELOPMENT	Jesus promises to complete the transforming work of maturity in each believer (Phil. 1:6).
Positive	MATURITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:14) • Becoming mature (Eph. 4:13) • Perseverance to maturity (James 1:4) • No longer foolish (Titus 3:3)
Negative	IMMATURITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idols made by humans are foolishness (Jer. 10:8). • In need of teaching (Rom. 2:20) • Ignorance of God's will (Eph. 5:17)
Illustrations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the effects of sin is that it stunts growth. God intended humans to live a full life. Sin does not allow us to reach our true potential. It makes people act like fools, in immature ways. • Sin has stunted our growth. Although we claim wisdom, our sin has made us fools (Rom. 1:22). • When Jesus cares for us, we become like trees planted by abundant waters that have the maturity to stand during droughts (Ps. 1:1).

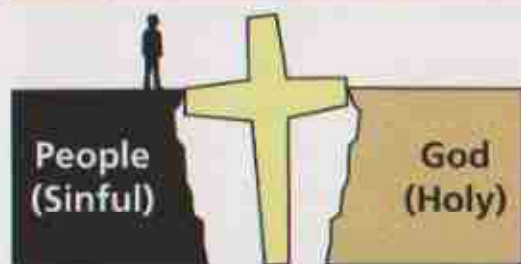
Metaphor	HEALTH	Jesus promises to be our physician and heal our minds, hearts, and souls (Mark 2:17).
Positive	HEALING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through Jesus' sacrifice, we are healed from our sins (Isa. 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24). • Prayer and confession to be healed (James 5:16) • God forgives our sins and heals our illness (Ps. 103:3).
Negative	ILLNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sickness (Matt. 9:2, 5; 1 Peter 2:24)

Illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The common experience of illness offers many possibilities to illustrate Christ's work. • "It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick..." Jesus used these words to describe his own ministry. The prophet Isaiah had promised: "No one living in Zion will say, 'I am ill'; and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven" (Isa. 33:24). • There are illnesses that our body can fight off alone. There are others, however, that require help. There are personality faults and character issues that one can deal with. There is a deep, moral problem, called sin, that only one physician can cure: Jesus. 	
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Metaphor	FAMILY	Through Jesus, believers become children of God and can call him, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6).
Positive	ADOPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christians become part of God's family (Rom. 8:15; Eph. 1:5). • Have the full rights of a son (Gal. 4:5). • Receive the assurance that God will resurrect believers' bodies.
Negative	ORPHAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The orphan, along with the widow and the poor, are the most vulnerable and needy in society (Deut. 10:18; James 1:26-27). • Life apart from God is like that of an orphan: full of uncertainty, danger, and lack of love (Hos. 14:1-3).

Illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orphans are some of the most neglected, unprotected, and unloved people in societies throughout history. • Family connections were decisive for survival and a chance to succeed. • Christians call God "Father" because God has adopted us into his family. • The word <i>Abba</i> is a close affectionate term like <i>daddy</i>. • Now, regardless of who our family is, whether they are good or not, we all have one, good Father. 	
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Metaphor	RELATIONSHIP	Jesus promises to be more than our master. He promises to be our friend (John 15:15).
Positive	FRIEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus gave his life for his friends (John 15:13). • We show our friendship through our obedience (John 15:14).
Negative	ENEMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We were God's enemies (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21); in Jesus, we are reconciled with God. • Jesus will defeat his enemies (1 Cor. 15:25).
Illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin has created a gap between God and humans. • This gap is enmity between God and us. • Jesus became a bridge that allows us to walk over to God. • Then, we can have a relationship with God as his friends. 	



This drawing illustrates how Jesus' work on the cross allows sinful people to begin a relationship with God and be rescued from eternal death.

Metaphor	RESCUE	Jesus promises to rescue and keep us safe forever (Deut. 31:6; Heb. 13:5).
Positive	SAVED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus came to save the world (John 3:17). • Saves us from our sins (Eph. 2:1-9). • Saves us from God's just wrath (Rom. 5:9). • Saves us from death (Heb. 2:14-15). • Whoever believes in Jesus will not perish (John 3:16). • Jesus gives eternal life (John 10:28).
Negative	PERISHING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God does not want anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9). • Eternal Death (Matt. 25:41, 46; Matt. 7:13; Rev. 20:14-15) • Gehenna (Garbage Dump) (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43-47; Luke 12:5)
Illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus speaks of the wicked perishing in "Gehenna." • Gehenna is another word for hell, but it was also the garbage dump of the city of Jerusalem, where garbage was continually burning. • Our sin had broken us and made us useless to God. • We were ready for the garbage dump. • Jesus came to rescue us from the never-ending trash pile. • Jesus' cross stands as a bridge that leads us to eternal safety. 	

Metaphor	FREEDOM	Jesus has promised us to make us free from all bondage (John 8:36).
Positive	DELIVERANCE	To free us to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New life (Rom. 6:4) • Freedom to serve (Gal. 5:1, 13) • Eternal life (John 10:28)
Negative	SLAVERY	To free us from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin (Rom. 6:18) • The curse of the law (Gal. 4:3–5) • The fear of death (Heb. 2:14–15)
Illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many things bind us: self-interest, addictions, broken relationships, anger and bitterness, destructive pasts, and debts. Sin captures our minds and hearts. Only a miracle can break those bonds. • Jesus breaks these bonds and gives us new life. This new life gives us the freedom to serve God, to become the people God wants us to be. 	

Metaphor	ECONOMIC	Jesus bought each believer at a price; the sale is final (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23).
Positive	PAYMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered himself as ransom (payment) on our behalf (Matt. 20:28; Heb. 9:15) • His sacrifice on the cross paid in full the debt that sin caused.
Negative	DEBT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin caused a “debt” with God—Jesus cancels this debt (Col. 2:14). • The price for redemption is high (1 Peter 1:19).
Illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult economic times make the burden of debts a very concrete reality. Although we often ignore it, the burden of sin is much heavier. • Getting rid of the huge weight of financial debt would allow people to start over, be wiser, and live better. Similarly, when Jesus lifts the weight of sin from us through his death, we are free to live life to the fullest. Jesus offers the opportunity to live without the burden of sin so we can live the abundant life that Jesus promises. 	

Redemption

- Redemption refers to the payment one offers for the deliverance of some one or something.
- In the ancient world, redemption was related to the freedom of prisoners of war and slaves. In this sense, God redeemed Israel from Egypt with power.
- The New Testament uses this metaphor to explain what Jesus accomplished on the cross. Jesus redeemed us from the power of sin and evil. His blood was the price he paid to make us free. The price for our freedom from sin and death was too high for any human to pay. Jesus alone was able to make the only and final payment for our redemption. Jesus’ redemption is a free offer to every person.

Metaphor	LEGAL	In Jesus we find complete forgiveness so God “will tread our sins underfoot and hurl our iniquities into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19).
Positive	FORGIVENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sins are forgiven forever (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:12). • Forgiveness comes from God’s grace (Eph. 1:7). • God desires for everyone to be forgiven (1 Tim. 2:4).
Negative	CRIME AND PUNISHMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A compassionate but just God (Num. 14:18) • God punishes sin (Lam. 3:39). • God is the ultimate judge (Prov. 24:12; Rom. 14:12).
Illustrations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people, at one point in their lives, have had to deal with a legal issue—a parking ticket, a dispute in court, the selling of a home, or other more serious cases. • While not pleasant, we understand that the legal requirements and process is necessary and healthy. • The Bible uses this metaphor to show both the necessity and the rightness of Jesus’ ministry of forgiveness and eventual judgment. • The legal consequences of sin are so big and eternal that we cannot deal with it on our own. Jesus is the only person who can and has done something about it. • His death on the cross has made it possible for us to receive God’s forgiveness. • The Bible presents Jesus’ work as an advocate on our behalf. He is our “defense lawyer” (Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1, 9).

Metaphor	MILITARY	Jesus has promised to give us lasting peace (John 14:27).
Positive	PEACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace with God through faith in Jesus (Rom. 5:1) • Jesus destroyed barriers of hostility (Eph. 2:14–22). • Jesus has defeated the powers of this world (1 Cor. 15:24–28). • Believers are also victorious (Rom. 8:31–39).
Negative	WAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We were God’s enemies (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21). • We were under the dominion of darkness (Col. 1:12–14). • We were followers of the Devil and his ways (Eph. 2:1–7).
Illustrations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life often feels like a battle: a battle with our own struggles and sin (Rom. 7:21–25), with external influences and pressures. • Yet, Jesus’ victory on the cross has defeated all the powers that bind and limit humanity: sin and death are defeated; Satan and his hosts are defeated. • Jesus’ death on the cross was D-Day for God’s people. In the famous day in World War II, the Allies overtook the beaches of Normandy and changed the course of the war. Jesus mortally wounded Satan and sealed his fate.

Evangelism Plans

These four evangelism plans are ways to illustrate the gospel so its message is easier to understand. These four plans have helped millions of Christians around the world to bring the message of the gospel in a simple yet effective way.

Four Spiritual Laws (Campus Crusade for Christ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life (John 3:16; 10:10).➤ Humans are sinful and separated from God. Thus, they cannot know and experience God's love and plan for their lives (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).➤ Jesus Christ is God's only provision for humanity's sin. Through Jesus, you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life (Rom. 5:8; John 14:6).➤ We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives (John 1:12; Eph. 2:8-9).
Bridge to Life (Navigators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The Bible teaches that God loves all humans and wants them to know him (John 10:10; Rom. 5:1).➤ But humans have sinned against God and are separated from God and his love. This separation leads only to death and judgment (Rom. 3:23; Isa. 59:2).➤ But there is a solution: Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins (the bridge between humanity and God) (1 Peter 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 5:8).➤ Only those who personally receive Jesus Christ into their lives, trusting him to forgive their sins, can cross this bridge. Everyone must decide individually whether to receive Christ (John 3:16; John 5:24).
Steps to Peace with God (Billy Graham Crusade)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Step 1. God's Plan ⇒ Peace and Life (Rom. 5:1; John 3:16; 10:10)➤ Step 2. Humanity's Problem ⇒ Separation (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Isa. 59:2)➤ Step 3. God's Remedy ⇒ The Cross (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Peter 3:18; Rom. 5:8)➤ Step 4. Human Response ⇒ Receive Christ (John 1:12; 5:24; Rom. 10:9)
The Romans Road of Salvation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Human Need (Rom 3:23)➤ Sin's Penalty (Rom 6:23)➤ God's Provision (Rom 5:8)➤ The Person's Response (Rom 10:9)

Citizenship in the Roman World

- The concept of Roman citizenship is the background for the Apostle Paul's use of citizenship as an illustration of salvation. The Apostle Paul was a Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:25–29).
- Access to Roman citizenship was limited and difficult to obtain. Although many people achieved, earned, or were granted Roman citizenship, their citizenship was of a secondary kind. Even this secondary type of citizenship provided many rights and protections. In the Roman Empire, when slaves were freed, they became citizens.

Metaphor	NATIONAL	Jesus allows us to become citizens of the kingdom of heaven.
Positive	CITIZEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fellow citizens (Eph. 2:19) • Citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20)
Negative	ALIEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alien to a sinful world (1 Peter 2:11) • People looking for a country of their own (Heb. 11:13) • Longing for our real home (2 Peter 3:13)
Illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a citizen of a country provides identity, security, and rootedness. • Christians are citizens of God's kingdom. Our loyalties are to God and his will. • In a globalized world, where people move so fast and everywhere, the concept of citizenship takes new meanings. • Our identity, security and sense of community do not depend on the place or culture in which we were born. Rather, it depends on the values of the kingdom of God. 	

Metaphor	VISION	Jesus promises to open our eyes so we can see him and God's wonders (Isa. 42:7).
Positive	SIGHT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus opened the eyes of his disciples (Luke 24:31). • Jesus came to give sight (Luke 4:18–19; John 9:39).
Negative	BLINDNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin is blindness (John 9:39–41). • Blind guides lead others astray (Matt. 23:16–17). • People blinded to the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4).
Illustrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Bible, physical blindness was a metaphor for spiritual blindness. • Jesus used this metaphor to teach about the gospel (see, John 9) • In the ancient world, only the "gods" were able to heal blindness. • Jesus restores both physical and spiritual sight to people. • Spiritual blindness has different causes: fear, unbelief, pride, greed, hatred, and egocentrism. Spiritual blindness prevents us from seeing God's doings in the world. 	

Metaphor	KNOWLEDGE	Jesus gives us the knowledge of God to be saved, to grow and mature, and live a life that pleases God (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25).
Positive	UNDERSTANDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus gives the knowledge of salvation (Luke 1:77). • The Spirit gives understanding of what Christ has done (1 Cor. 2:12). • We have wisdom from God (Eph. 1:8, 17; Col. 2:2-3; James 1:5).
Negative	IGNORANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge causes destruction (Hos. 4:6). • Life apart from God is a life of ignorance (1 Peter 1:14). • Foolishness separates us from God (Jer. 5:21; 10:8; Titus 3:3).
Illustrations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The knowledge the Bible refers here is not only mental knowledge. It also means intimate knowledge. It is a knowledge that affects the mind and the heart. • To truly get to know a person, reading a biography, hearing from other people, or spending a few minutes with a person is not enough. One needs time and energy to develop a relationship. After that time, one <i>knows</i> the other person. • It is not only book knowledge that allows us to know God and obtain salvation; we need deep, relational knowledge of Jesus. • The Holy Spirit gives us this knowledge primarily through the Scriptures, prayer, and fellowship with other believers.

Metaphor	TRUTH	Jesus offers the only truth that can lead us to God (John 14:6).
Positive	CORRECT/ TRUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salvation as knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4) • The gospel is the word of truth (Eph. 1:13; John 17:17). • The truth of the gospel makes us free (John 8:32). • The Holy Spirit leads us to the truth (John 16:13).
Negative	ERROR/ FALSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • False prophets deceive and lead astray (Ezek. 13:1-23; Matt. 24:11, 24). • False teachings lead to destruction (2 Peter 2:1-2).
Illustrations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traveling without a map can lead to an exciting adventure or a disastrous end. A map is helpful when we follow its instructions. A correct map will lead us faithfully. An incorrect map will lead us astray. • The words of the gospel lead us correctly to our final destination.

Metaphor	NAVIGATION	Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He promises to guide us to the right destination (Luke 19:10).
Positive	FOUND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lost have been returned (1 Peter 2:25). • The Good Shepherd seeks the lost sheep (Matt. 18:12). • Jesus came to save what was lost (Luke 19:10). • Joy in heaven for the found (Luke 15:1–7) • Joy over the lost who is found (Luke 15:11–32)
Negative	LOST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We were lost (Isa. 53:6; Jer. 50:6; Mark 6:34).
Illustrations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sense of being lost, especially in a hostile environment, produces many and strong emotions: fear, anxiety, anger, and disappointment. • The final problem is that lost people are incapable of reaching their destination. • Jesus reorients us toward our correct destination: God’s kingdom. When Jesus saves us, we begin to walk in the direction that will lead us to our final destination in God’s presence.

Metaphor	AMBULATORY—RELATED TO WALKING	Jesus promises to walk alongside us: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).
Positive	STANDING/WALKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking on the path of righteousness (Prov. 8:20; 12:28) • The path of life revealed (Acts 2:28; Ps. 16:11) • Jesus keeps us from falling (Jude 1:24).
Negative	FALLING/STUMBLING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those burdened by sin stagger and fall (Isa. 3:8). • Those who do not know Christ will stumble over him (Rom. 9:32, 33; Isa. 8:14). • Unbelief on Jesus causes us to fall (1 Peter 2:8; Luke 20:18).
Illustrations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking in God’s paths is a common metaphor in the Bible. • <i>Walking</i> brings to mind the idea of movement and journey, the satisfactions and benefits of traveling as well as the difficulties involved in it. • As we walk, we learn, grow, and move forward. • However, walking requires a direction, lest it becomes a mere wandering. • One way to understand sin is that one misses the mark, or one’s destination. • Jesus gives us a new orientation. • The Holy Spirit is our compass, and the Scriptures our map. • Only by walking alongside Jesus can we reach God, our true destination.

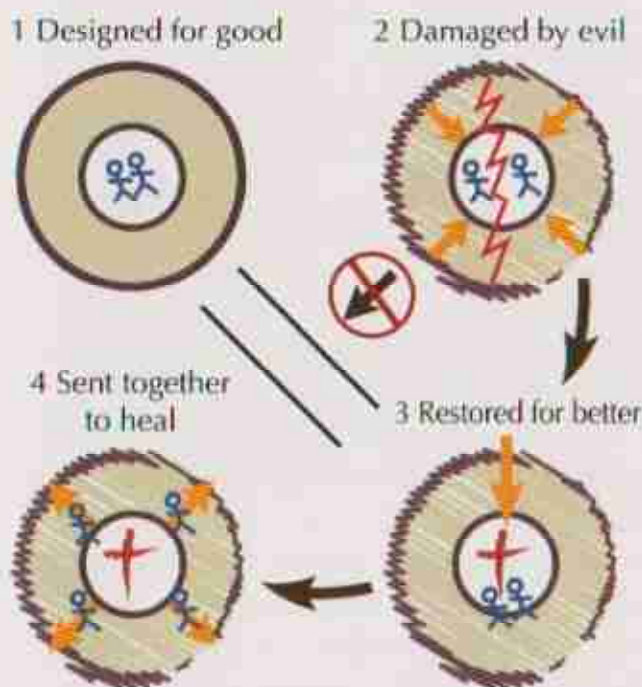
Metaphor	LIGHT	Jesus is the light that shines on our path toward God (John 12:46).
Positive	LIGHT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12). • Jesus' light shines in our hearts (2 Cor. 4:4-6). • Children of light (Eph. 5:8). • Jesus has rescued us from darkness (Col. 1:13). • Putting aside the deeds of darkness (Rom. 13:12).
Negative	DARK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living in darkness have seen a great light (Matt. 4:16). • Humans have loved darkness (John 3:19).
Illustrations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A campfire in the wilderness provides light, warmth, safety, and sustenance. • The light helps campers to find their way back to the camp. It provides warmth for the night. It keeps wild animals away. It cooks food and purifies water. • In a similar way, Jesus provides us with guiding light, warmth, safety, and sustenance for our journey of life.

Sin

- Disobeying God's law in deed or attitude is a common definition of sin. The Bible uses illustrations to explain the meaning of sin.
- One of these illustrations is the idea of missing the mark. The most common words for sin in the Old and the New Testaments have the basic meaning of someone missing the mark. When people disobey, rebel, or act on their iniquity, their actions and thoughts miss the mark of God's Law. Acting or thinking in a way that contradicts God's Law leads us in a path away from God.

Metaphor	PURITY	Jesus promises to cleanse us completely from our sins (Heb. 9:14).
Positive	PURE/CLEAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus purifies his people (Titus 2:14). • Jesus' blood purifies us from sin (1 John 1:9).
Negative	IMPURITY/ DIRTY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus did not call us to be impure (1 Thess. 4:7). • We were slaves to impurity (Rom. 6:19).
Illustrations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleanliness and dirtiness are daily experiences in life. The idea of cleaning something to make it acceptable is easy to visualize. • We clean our homes, our clothing, our bodies to make them presentable and pleasant for others. • Sin corrupts and makes people impure. • People cannot make themselves clean of this pollution on their own. • However, God cleans us with Jesus' blood to make us acceptable, pleasant to himself.

Metaphor	AGRICULTURAL	By being connected to Jesus, God's people have new life, can be fruitful, and have an abundant life.
Positive	CONNECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is portrayed as a caring gardener (Isa. 5:1-7). • Jesus allows us to be saved by grafting us into the tree to become part of his people (Rom. 11:24). • God's people are like trees planted by streams of water (Ps. 1:3). • Only by being connected to Jesus, the true vine, can we bear fruit (John 15:1-8).
Negative	SEPARATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By pruning Israel, God allowed Gentiles to become part of God's people (Rom. 11:17-21). • People without Jesus are like chaff that the wind blows away (Ps. 1:4). • No one can bear fruit apart from Jesus (John 15:4, 5-6).
Illustrations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardening has become a more common urban activity—and continues to be vital in rural communities. Grafting and pruning are common activities in gardening. • Gardeners, professional and amateur, understand how important pruning is for the care and productivity of plants. • Like a gardener caring for his plants, God cares for his people. • God takes each of us, lifeless chaff, and grafts us into the tree of his people to give us new life. • Being saved is like being a plant, which is cared for and fruitful, in God's garden.



James Choung's Four Circles illustration shows God's original intention for his creation. God made humans to be and do good. However, sin affected our ability to do good. We became self-centered and enslaved to sin. Our sin breaks our relationship with God, nature, and one another.

Jesus came to restore humanity. His death on the cross liberated us from the slavery of sin and death.

Being free from sin, believers can become ambassadors of God. God is sending believers to heal relationships by preaching the good news of Jesus to a lost humanity.

Humans cannot move from circle 2 to 4 because sin has opened a gap that separates God from humans. Only through Christ is it possible to reach God.

Metaphor	CREATION	Jesus gives us the opportunity to be born again, to be a new creation. It is more than a fresh start. It is the right start (John 3:16–18).
Positive	NEW CREATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus used the language of being born again (John 3:3, 7; 1 Peter 1:23). • Those born of God are children of God (1 John 3:9–10). • Christians are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). • Jesus is presented as the second Adam (Rom. 5:15–17). • Jesus is the firstborn of the new creation (1 Cor. 15:27; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:15; Phil. 3:21).
Negative	OLD CREATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin transformed all of creation (Gen. 3:18; Rom. 8:22). • Sin entered through Adam's disobedience (Rom. 5:12–14). • This creation will pass and God will make all things new (Rev. 21:1; 2 Peter 3:13). • Nothing of the old creation can enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5).
Illustrations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus illustrated this point with a common object of his time: an unshrunk cloth to patch an old garment (Matt. 9:16). • The illustration is clear: when the garment is washed, the patch will shrink and tear the garment beyond repair. The old and the new do not mix with each other. • In the same way, God's grace requires a new heart (Ezek. 36:26). • Just as God makes us a new creation, God will make all things new one day (Rev. 21:1).

Creation to New Creation

Human Nature	What	When	Where	Who
Innocent	Good heart (Gen. 1:31)	In the beginning (past time)	In Eden (in paradise)	In Adam (our first parent)
Fallen	Corrupt heart (Gen. 3:19; 6:5,11,12; Rom. 3:9–19)	Upon the first sin (present time)	Upon the Earth (a wilderness outside Eden)	Upon all humanity
Redeemed	Transformed heart (Rom. 12:1–2)	At Christ's death and resurrection (present time)	At Calvary (outside the city of Jerusalem)	At conversion (all who are in Christ)
Perfect	Pure heart (Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14)	The age to come (future time)	The new heavens and earth (in the New Jerusalem)	God's people (believers in Christ, the last Adam)