

Contents

Introduction: The Gospel for Our Cities.....	9
1. The Need for the Gospel.....	19
2. G—God’s Image.....	24
3. O—Open Fellowship.....	30
4. S—Sin Introduced.....	36
5. P—Penalty and Price.....	42
6. E—Enter Jesus.....	49
7. L—Life Everlasting.....	55
8. What Now?.....	60
Thebonical Glossary.....	71



The Need for the Gospel

Recently I was asked to minister, through preaching and Gospel-centered rap, to a group of teens from the south side of Kansas City's urban core. Toward the end of my sermon, I asked how many of them had been saved by Jesus. Immediately, with all confidence, forty-plus hands were thrown up as if I just asked who wanted free money. Their response led to my second question, *What is the Gospel?* Their hands went down just as quickly as they rose, and puzzled looks of confusion began to cover every face in the auditorium.

Keeping their attention, I immediately asked how long each of them had been in church and how long they have been *saved*. Students at once began to shout out, "I've been in church and saved since I was born," and "I've been saved since I was two, and that's when I started coming to church." As the conversation picked up momentum, a change took place that was evident by the puzzled looks that jumped off their faces and onto mine, making room for them to *rock* a confidence that would humble

Kanye West.

As my heart grieved, I silently asked God to help me bring clarity to these precious young people by providing me with an illustration to share with them that would hit home. To God's glory, He answered my prayer immediately. As the students sat there assured of themselves, I asked them a question that would begin to expose the harsh reality they were failing to see. I gripped the microphone tightly, brought it close to my lips, and asked, "How long has Young Money been around?" With continued confidence, the students shouted, "two to two-and-a-half-years." I then asked the students to name all the rappers on Young Money, and with joy students began to look at each other with competition in their eyes. Each student tried to outshout everyone else in the auditorium with the names of rappers on Young Money, such as Lil Wayne, Drake, Nicki Minaj, Cory Gunz, Gudda Gudda, Jae Mills, Lil Chuckee, and Lil Twist.

Their ability to quickly rattle off so many names prompted me to step in and make my point. I put the microphone back up to my lips. "Okay, okay, *I see you,*" and the students all began to laugh. However, their laughter soon turned to embarrassment as I gently exposed them to the reality they failed to see. I quieted them down and broke the silence by softly saying, "You mean to tell me that you all claim to know Jesus as your Savior, you have been in church for all of your lives, and you cannot tell me the one message God has declared to be the power of

salvation to the sinner—yet you can rattle off every rapper on Young Money who has only been out for a few years?” A hush of disbelief fell on everyone in the room!

Two weeks later I was privileged to minister through preaching and Gospel-centered rap at a fall conference for youth from a solid suburban church in the Minneapolis metropolitan area. When asked if they knew the Gospel, their response was the exact opposite of the urban youth. Most of them were able to communicate the Gospel, and it was at this point I realized the problem: the urban students could not communicate the Gospel because they did not understand the Gospel, even though they belong to a church that faithfully preaches the Gospel. I know both youth pastors personally, and know they communicate the Gospel to their youth, yet the suburban church has a greater success rate than the urban church when it comes to students actually knowing and *spillin'* the Gospel.

This begs the question: Why?

I didn't realize it at the time, but a young, urban, teenage girl at the Kansas City event answered my question when she bluntly said, “Tonight when you preached the message, it was the first time I ever understood what Jesus did for me. Thank you!” The message I shared that night was broken down into bite-size pieces with illustrations to which urban students could relate. The message I shared that night was the GOSPEL, the six-part message of good news that follows in chapters 2–7.

A GOSPEL Rap

“THE NEED”

Hook:

My whole life has been unfair / I go thru the motions but am not there
Life's passed by, I'm so distant / I want to stop existing and
finally start living.

You said I could go to you. How can I get close to you?
What am I supposed to do—to believe in what I know is true?
Please tell me what I need, tell me, tell me, tell me what I need. (2x)

Verse 1:

I'ma put you up on game, show you yo deficiency.
I know that you wanna change, from the hopeless misery.
I know that you cope with pain, drinking Coke & Hennessey,
And smoking thangs that blow ya brain, if that's you, yo come
get wit me.

What I got's not what ya want, but I know it's what you need.
The Gospel is yo medicine, prescription for yo disease—
A disease that we all had since our conception.
The Gospel message “Ushers” in “these are my confessions.”

I'm open air yellin', wake up this life ain't “just a dream”
That ends with frostbite, from all of our custom bling.
Salvation's call's God's VIP custom ring
That will have ya screaming “OMG” like when “Usher” sings.

Verse 2:

You would think that in the church all our people got it all,
Not all, when the Gospel's defined as the altar call.
Somebody tell these pastors ain't nut'n funny
When our kids despise Christ, but idolize Young Money.

Our Kids praise grills, chase thrills, takin' pain pills
Shorty, the Gospel is the flood warnin', Jae Mills.
The Gospel's an offense, it murders yo' feelings
So God will blow the roof off ya dome, no ceilings.

I used to live a life darker than whisky in bars
Then the Light of Christ shined right thru me, Nicki Minaj.
I spit the Gospel to the elderly and lil kids;
It's the best kept "little secret" wit a "lil twist."

Verse 3:

Ya pain is so intense ya cut yaself to relieve hurt
Ya searched for joy, can't find it, look again, . . . research.
Christ went to the cross for our joy's sake,
So we'd never be "so far gone" like that boy Drake.

He took the punishment for all ya sin, like He did it
Forgiveness He wit it, accept Him wit Glee like Eve—get it?
I just gave ya the Gospel, can ya dig now?
Get a life & chuck ya deuces to the world, Chris Brown.