

Illustrations to Use in Sharing the Gospel

Love

Paternal (God loves us because we are made in His image): Do you have a son or daughter? Do you love him/her? Why? It's because he's part of your family and made in your image. Would you still love that child even if he/she did something wrong against your wishes? We, too, are initially part of God's creation, made in his image. But even though we've turned away from him, He continues to reach out in love to us.

Sin

Rock (All fall short of God's standards): Let's suppose you and I were both to pick up a rock and try to throw it to China (or some other location mentioned in the conversation). Neither of us would reach the target because it is too far. Well, God is completely holy and perfect, so His target for us is perfection. None of us can claim to be without sin, so we all fall short of His standard.

Three a day (All fall short of God's standards): How bad are we in comparison to God's standard of perfection? Suppose you were a relatively good person who sinned only three times a day. This includes every bad thought, word, and action. This would amount to over 1000 sins a year. Multiply this by your age, and you'll see that you have fallen much short of God's perfect standard!

Central Business District (We have no excuse for sin): I once drove to a hotel in the business district at 6:15 PM. As I approached the road, I noticed that the big sign over the road said, "Restricted Zone: In Progress." However, it was too late to return and get a day pass. The police wrote down my car's license number, and three weeks later, I received a ticket for \$70. Even though I was sincere, even though I was ignorant of the sign until it was too late, and even though I could offer other excuses, in the final analysis, I had no excuse.

Archery (All fall short of God's standards): One definition of sin is an archery term that means to "miss the mark." There's a bullseye that is rarely hit. Morally speaking, God is perfect and always hits the "bullseye." But we always fall short of His standards.

Non-swimmers (Man cannot save himself): Suppose a ship sank, but none of the passengers in the water could swim. When each turned to his friend for help, what would happen? Of course, all would die, for they would all be in the same predicament. What if each one tried to save himself by pulling himself out of the water? Death would also result. In like manner, man cannot save himself *spiritually*. Spiritually speaking, we're all in the water together and drowning.

Death

Capital Punishment (Certain sins result in death)

The government has established various laws to punish those who sin. If one is caught with drugs in his possession at the airport, the law says that person must die. Why? To uphold standards for society. God's standards are even higher than the government's, and He says that sin must result in death.

Wages (We have all earned death): Suppose you were to work for me for a day, and I pay you \$50. This would be your wages since it represents what you have earned. The Bible says that because of our sins, we have all earned death as our wage (Rom. 6:23).

Substitution

Book (Christ bore the weight of our sin upon Himself): Your sin weighs upon you just like this book weighs down my hand. But my other hand represents Jesus, and God desires to take this weight off you to place it on Jesus (turn the book over and put it on the other hand).

Cancer (Christ exchanges His goodness for our sin): Suppose you had cancer, and through some medical means, I was able to take your cancer cells into my own body in exchange for my good cells into *your* body. What would happen to me? Right, I would die. What would happen to you? Yes, you would live.

Kai (Christ gave His blood for us)

During the Vietnam War, an orphanage was located near an American Marine Base. One day, the North Vietnamese fired mortar shells into the orphanage, killing dozens of children and wounding many more. A boy named Kai had a seriously injured friend who needed a blood transfusion. Kai's friend had a rare blood type, and only Kai's blood matched it. Little Kai had never heard of a blood transfusion before, but when the American doctors explained that it would save his friend's life, little Kai volunteered. Kai began to whimper as his blood began to flow to his friend. When the doctors asked if it hurt, he said no. A little later, he whimpered again. Again, he told the doctors it did not hurt. Finally, the doctors asked, "What's wrong, Kai?" With tears coursing down his light brown, dusty cheeks, Kai asked, "When am I to die, sir, when am I to die?" Little Kai did not know that he would give only a *portion* of his blood. He thought he would give it all, and he was willing to die for his little friend.

Snake (Christ took the cause of our death upon Himself): A poisonous snake once bit a little girl in her backyard. Seeing that the girl would be dead in just a few minutes, the girl's mother cut her daughter's leg and sucked out the venom. The girl lived, but the poison killed the mother, who, in effect, had died as her daughter's substitute.

Drawbridge (People take Christ's death for granted): A man once had a job to lower a drawbridge twice a day at 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM for people to take a train over a river to and from work. He had a young boy he loved very much but was too young for school, so he often accompanied his father up to the switching station. They would usually wave to the train passengers as the train passed by. One day at about 3:45, while the bridge was up, the man lost track of the whereabouts of his son, who had wandered off. He looked for him, panicking for several minutes, but had to give up the search as the train came full steam towards the raised drawbridge. He made it back to the switching house in time enough to lower the bridge, but just as he reached for the lever, he spotted his son, far down below him—in the gears! The father had to make a split-second decision—either to leave the bridge up and cause the train to hit the raised drawbridge and crash into the river or to allow the gears to crush his only son to save the train passengers. With pools of tears in his eyes and great anguish in his heart, he lowered the drawbridge, crushing his small boy in the powerful gears. The people on the train safely passed by as usual, unaware of the enormous cost to save their lives. Those on earth know an even greater cost to save us—the precious Son of the Father—who was crushed for our sins. Yet we often act like the passengers and glibly cast aside the tremendous sacrifice on our behalf.

Judge (God balances his fairness with mercy): A judge once had a boy come before him for sentencing only to discover that the lad was his son. To be fair to the law, he set the fine at the appropriate amount but then did something unusual. Laying down his legal robes, he came down from the bench and paid the fine himself to the officer, thus satisfying the legal requirement while at the same time being gracious to the boy he loved. In like manner, Christ also saw our awful predicament in our disobedience, except in our case, the penalty was much more severe, which is

death itself. But Jesus laid aside his royal robes as God and came and paid that death penalty himself, thus satisfying the penalty and showing us his grace.

Siblings (Satisfaction for sin has been paid by Christ): Suppose you killed someone and ran away, then the dead person's family members came looking for you for revenge. However, your brother/sister loves you very much and delivers himself/herself over to these people, who vent their anger by killing him/her. This would satisfy the anger of the relatives and save your life.

Soldier (Christ died for ungrateful, ungodly people): A promising, young American lieutenant who graduated from West Point Military Academy soon found himself leading a group of recruits to fight the North Vietnamese in Vietnam. One night, they confronted the enemy, who wounded one of their men. The rest ran for cover in a trench, where they stayed all night, listening to the groans of the dying, wounded soldier a few feet away. Finally, the lieutenant could not bear to hear the cries of his friend any longer and risked his life to save the man. He successfully pulled him back to the trench, but as he was about to hop in himself, he was shot in the back and killed instantly. Sometime later, back in the US, the brave lieutenant's parents heard that the young soldier whom their son had saved was in town. The surviving soldier came to their home late, drunk, using profanity, and insensitive to the significant cost given for his own life. After shutting the door behind the young soldier, the bereaved mother could only say, "I gave my precious son to save *that* wretch of a man?" Likewise, the Father gave his precious Son, Jesus Christ, to save an ungrateful, profane race like ours.

Gift

Birthday (Seeking to earn our salvation insults God): People give you gifts on your birthday, don't they? Have you ever insisted upon paying for a gift? How would your friend or relative feel if you did this? How do you think God feels when He offers us eternal life for free, but we insist that we must pay for it (by our good works, baptism, church attendance, money, religious rituals, etc.)?

Pencil (The gift of salvation must be received to apply to us): I would like to give you this pencil for free (extend it to the person). If you pay me 10¢ or *any* price for it, it's not a gift. If you work for me in any way, it's not a gift. It's simply yours—you need only to receive it.

Faith

Jet (Christ is trustworthy): Suppose I was employed by the ticket counter at an airport in a poor country to lead you to your jet to get you back home. I lead you to a plane that hadn't been painted for years, had oil leaking out of the back, had part of a wing broken off, and had a hole in three windows. How would you feel? When you hesitate, I reply, "Oh, don't worry. Just have *faith*, and this jet will get you home!" The important thing isn't the amount of your faith; it's the condition of the jet!

Ice (Christ is trustworthy): What do you think would happen if you walked out on a lake frozen over with ice 1 millimeter thick? Of course, you'd fall in! What if you *sincerely believed* that the ice would hold you up? Yes, you'd *still* fall in! How about if the ice was 1 meter thick? Would it hold you up? Even if you had very little faith that it would? You see, the issue is not *how much* faith you have; it's what or *whom you place your faith in!* Many people sincerely trust "thin ice" to sustain them in this life and the next, but it won't work. On the other hand, even if you place your little faith in Christ, you put this trust in the right source. He'll sustain you.

Chair (We all exercise faith every day): Have you ever personally met the designer of this chair? (Pause for an answer.) When you sat down on this chair, you exercised faith.

Doctor (Faith can be placed in Christ because of His credentials): Once, my wife got very sick, and I took her to the hospital. When the doctor gave her some pills to take, she took them without asking any questions at all! Can you imagine that? She had never *seen* the man before, we had never *been* to this hospital before, and we didn't know *who* made the pills or even their *chemical composition*! Why would she do such an outrageous thing as take a pill which, for all she knew, could have been poison? (Pause for an answer.) This was a simple act of faith in the credentials of one whom the hospital had deemed competent. As my wife found the doctor competent to meet her physical needs, I have found Jesus Christ competent to meet all my spiritual needs.

Pilot (Faith can be placed in Christ because of His credentials): Have you ever taken a plane ride? Did you personally know the pilot of the jet? No, you exercised faith in this person to get you to your destination without ever knowing him.

Niagara (Biblical faith is a commitment—not simply intellectual assent): A famous tightrope walker once performed the most incredible feat of his career by walking across Niagara Falls with only the aid of a balancing bar. The crowd was very enthusiastic! “Do you think I can do it without the balancing bar?” he asked. The crowd cheered him on, so he did it. “How many feel I can take a wheelbarrow across and back?” The crowd went wild again, “Yes! You can do it!” they yelled. So, he went back and forth with a wheelbarrow. “Who believes I can do it again with a dog inside?” the tightrope walker shouted. “We do!” responded the crowd, so a dog was brought over, placed in the wheelbarrow, and the two made another successful trip. “Now, who believes that I can do it with an even heavier load within the wheelbarrow—with the weight of a person inside?” he asked. By this time, the crowd was ecstatic and going wild. “Any volunteers?” came the request. (Pause.) No one volunteered! They believed *intellectually* that he could take them across, but they were not committed to this belief. In like manner, many people *intellectually* believe Christ can take them to God, but they are unwilling to *commit* themselves to that belief. Such belief without personal commitment is not genuine belief.

Circles (Biblical faith is a commitment—not simply intellectual assent): Two circles can be used to represent two kinds of life. Trusting Christ means being willing to turn your life over to Him to let Him direct your life. (See Four Spiritual Laws)