

♦**Green.** Each year, I get excited when the first shades of green start to peek out from lawns that have been brown all winter. When I see the lawns green up and begin to grow, I know spring and summer will soon follow.

- The green color reminds me that because of Christ's cross, I can grow, too—any and every time of year. God has planted the seed of his word in my heart, and he will cultivate it.
- “But grow in the special favor and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

♦**Yellow.** The last color reminds us that life on this earth is not all there is. Jesus has promised us, “I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am” (John 14:2–3). We've heard many promises from God today, and this is the best promise of all!

TAKING IT HOME

I love to hear this story. And I love to tell this story—the story of Jesus and his love. I hope you do, too. And I hope that the card and (*name gift*) you have received will help you remember it and tell others about it often!

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#GOS2DS (GOS2DA)



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THE GOSPEL STORY

BY COLORS

INTRODUCTION

There is an old Gospel song that begins, “I love to tell the story.” That story centers in our Savior, Jesus, and his love. It's a true story, and the lyrics remind us that even those of us who have heard that story again and again, those of us who know that story best, “are hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.”

Today I'm going to use this (*name Gospel Colors item*) and card to retell that “old, old story of Jesus and his love.” Perhaps some of you will hear it—really hear it—for the first time. Others of you will find, during the telling of it, one more chance to praise Jesus for his lifelong love and mercy toward you. I pray that all of us will leave here longing eagerly to keep on hearing and telling that story. I also pray we will be better equipped to do so.

GETTING TO THE HEART

The story of Jesus is a story of very good news. Still, that story always starts out with some very bad news.

♦ **Black.** Have you ever gotten lost in the dark? How did you escape from your predicament?

- Scripture often uses darkness as a word picture or metaphor for the sinful condition of all human beings apart from Christ. The Bible describes it as a unique darkness, malignant and deadly. (See John 3:19; Colossians 1:13.)
- Usually when the lights go out, people look for a flashlight or candle so they don't hurt themselves by stumbling or falling. But those in spiritual darkness, those without Christ in their lives, avoid and hate the light. John 3:19 says, "Their judgment is based on this fact: The light from heaven came into the world, but they loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil." Note the legal language, the word *judgment*, in this passage; we've been on trial, and heaven's court has found us guilty.
- Because of our sin, all of us deserve to hear God, the Holy Judge, pronounce the death sentence, for "all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3:23).

♦ **Red.** We chose the darkness. Our Creator-God could have left us alone in that darkness to die forever, but our next color reminds us that he did not. He knew we could not possibly escape from the darkness of our sin. So, in love, God came to help us!

- The Bible says, "[God] has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and he has brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13).
- This rescue didn't happen easily. A ransom had to be paid—an incredibly precious ransom. Business executives who live and work in countries overseas often worry about being kidnapped and held for ransom. In fact,

some insurance companies write policies intended to pay any ransom a gang of kidnappers might demand. Our freedom cost God much more than mere money. No amount of silver or gold would do (1 Peter 1:18–19). Rather, Scripture says that Jesus "made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of his blood on the cross" (Colossians 1:20).

♦ **Blue.** God's love for us—sinners though we are—is a mystery! Christ's ransom, the blood shed on his cross, is a mystery! Faith is another mystery. In a way no human being can fully understand, God gives us faith to believe that he saved us through Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection—even though these events happened nearly two thousand years ago!

- The Bible reminds us "We become right with God, not by doing what the law commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 2:16).

♦ **White.** Think back to the last time you had to clean up a real mess. Maybe you were covered with dirt head to toe, after a tiring day of mulching and other yard work. Maybe, as you changed the oil in your car, you spilled it all over your hands, shirt, and pants—and then slipped headfirst onto the pavement. Maybe your dog escaped, only to return an hour later, stinky and full of burrs. Cleanup in cases like these can take a lot of soap—strong soap!

- No soap on earth can cleanse us from our sins. King David knew this. In Psalm 51 he prays, "Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7).
- Sometimes we are tempted to believe that if we just put in enough effort, we can transform ourselves into the godly people God wants us to be. Sometimes we urge our children or our friends, "You can do it if you just try harder!" David knew better. He prays, in essence, "You yourself wash me, Lord! Then I will be clean!"

seed of his Word in my heart, and he will water it and fertilize it. The Bible urges us to “grow in the special favor and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

•**YELLOW.** This last strip, the yellow one, reminds me that life on this earth is not all there is. Someday, all believers will live with Jesus forever in heaven. Jesus has promised us, “I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am” (John 14:2–3). Because of Jesus, we belong to God’s family forever! Not even death can stop God’s love and care for us!

This promise makes me very happy—and yellow reminds me of that happiness! We’ve heard many promises from God today, but this just may be the best promise of all!

Taking It Home

I am going to give each of you a Gospel by Colors gift just like mine. You can use the colors to remind you what God has done for you in our Savior, Jesus! You can also use this gift to help you share this good news with other people. Whom will you tell?

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#GOS2DS (GOS2DC)



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The Gospel Story by Colors

Introduction

Show the children a Gospel Story by Colors gift item. Ask them, “What’s different about this?” (For most children, the colors on the cross will be new.)

These colors remind me of everything God has done for me—and for you. I am going to tell you about the colors. Then I am going to give each of you a key chain (or wristlet) just like this one. You can use the colors to tell other people what God has done for them in our Savior, Jesus.

Getting to the Heart

The story of Jesus is a story of very, very good news. Still, that story always starts out with some very bad news.

●**BLACK.** Ask, “**Do you know anyone who is afraid of the dark? Why might darkness cause us to feel afraid?**” (Let a volunteer or two explain.)

If you walk around in the dark, you can easily trip over something and fall. Or you can stub your toe. Even people who aren't really afraid of the dark know it can be dangerous. The Bible tells us that without Christ, all people are lost in the darkness of sin. It teaches us that sin is everything God has forbidden. We sin every time we do or think something that hurts other people or ourselves. Sometimes, sin seems really terrible, like stealing or killing. But sometimes sin doesn't seem so terrible, like selfishly taking the front seat when we know our sister wants it. Sin is also *not* saying or doing kind things when we *could* do them! Anytime we act in ways different than our Lord Jesus would, we sin. And, everyone sins. The Bible says, “All have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard” (Romans 3:23).

This darkness of sin is more dangerous than we can imagine. We hurt ourselves as we keep sinning, and by our sin we earn God's punishment. The black strip reminds me of my sin.

●**RED.** Have any of you ever visited a cave, deep in the earth? Sometimes when you tour a cave like that, the tour guide shuts off the lights. The darkness in an underground cave can be very frightening, almost suffocating! Suppose you visited a cave like that, and the tour guide sneaked away, leaving you alone and lost in the dark?

That's almost too scary to imagine! I know something even scarier! God could have left us alone in the darkness of our sin! But the next color on the cross reminds us that he did not do that. He loves us too much. The Bible says, “[God] has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and he has brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son [Jesus]” (Colossians 1:13). You may

know another verse that tells about that—John 3:16. *If the children have memorized this verse, have them recite it in unison with you; otherwise, read it to them:* “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

Jesus bled and then died on the cross so we can live forever in heaven with God. The red strip reminds me of what Jesus did.

●**BLUE.** Even though we are sinners, God loves us! This is a mystery no one can fully understand. He loves us so much he had Jesus die on a cross and take the punishment for our sin. This, too, is a mystery no one can fully understand. And faith is another mystery. God gives us faith to believe that he saved us through Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection.

The Bible tells us “we become right with God, not by doing what the law commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16). The blue strip reminds me of God's gift to me—faith in Jesus.

●**WHITE.** Ask, “**Have you ever gotten really, really dirty? How dirty were you?**” (Let one or two volunteers tell about making mud pies, sliding into third base after a thunderstorm, and so on.) You probably needed a lot of soap to get clean again. I'm glad we have soap that cleans us and kills the bacteria that could make us sick.

But no soap on earth can wash away our sins. King David knew this. In Psalm 51 he prays this to God: “Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow” (Psalm 51:7). The white strip on this cross reminds me that because of Jesus and his cross, my sins are washed away and I am clean before God.

●**GREEN.** Do you like spring? Many people look forward to the start of baseball season, to picnics, and to warmer weather. When we see the first blades of green grass, we know that spring and summer will soon follow. Spring is a time of new life and growth.

The green strip reminds me that because of Christ's cross, I can grow, too—at any and every time of year. God has planted the