

Wonderful Box

A clever "puzzle" that can be used to share the essential concepts of The Gospel.

A Quick Overview:

A volunteer is given a one dollar bill that is tucked away inside a puzzle box. It is explained that the dollar is a gift and opening the box is merely a fun 'exercise.' After a few minutes the volunteer makes no progress in opening the box. When he or she gives up, the owner of the box easily opens the box and gives the money to the volunteer. The owner of the box then shares with the volunteer a clear and easily understood gospel message. The metaphor used in the message relates directly to the every action of the puzzle box 'exercise.'

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The Gospel Message:

When you explain The Gospel with the Wonderful Box you will both visibly and clearly show AND explain these four concepts.

- 1. Heaven (Eternal Life) is a free gift.** (Romans 6:23 ...the GIFT of God is Eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord...)
- 2. No matter how hard you try, you can not earn it yourself. It (Eternal Life) is not earned, nor deserved.** (Ephesians 2:8,9 For by grace, you have been saved by faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God. Not of works, lest anyone should boast.)
- 3. We all fall short; fail. Our mistakes (sins) seperate us from God.** (Romans 3:23 All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of god.)
- 4. But when we put our trust in Jesus Christ, He alone can (and will) give us Eternal Life.** (Romans 10:13 Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.)

This is a simple overview. Depending on your presentation parts three and four can (and probably should) be explained in greater detail.

The Presentation:

Offer a dollar bill to a volunteer. Tell them it is a 'free gift.' However, explain that 'just for fun' you would like to see if they can get the dollar bill out of this puzzle box. Explain that getting the dollar bill out of the box is NOT a requirement for ownership of the dollar. You 'just wanna see if you can get it out.' Insert the bill into the slot in the top of the box and give the box to your volunteer. Give the volunteer a few minutes to work on the puzzle box. After a few minutes (at least 5) ask the volunteer if they got the bill out. Elicit a "no" answer. Ask your volunteer: "Would you like me to get it for you?" Try to get them to say "yes." Take the box, and open it out of view so the volunteer (and no one else) can see how it is opened. However, open it in such a location where any audience can tell you aren't switching boxes or doing some sort of trickery. Hand the dollar bill to the volunteer. Ask: "Whose dollar bill is that." Encourage them to say "mine." Then ask "Well, you could not get it yourself, but you have it now. How did you get it?" They will probably say something like: "You gave it to me." Reply: "Exactly! I asked if you wanted help and you said..." "Yes" "Right, you said 'yes' and now it is yours, and yours to spend."

On the next page you will read how to explain what happened above and then begin to relate the puzzle box to the gospel message.

The explanation of the Wonderful Box metaphor goes something like this:

"This particular dollar bill is a lot like eternal life. YOU CAN HAVE IT! It is YOURS! 'The gift of God is eternal life!' The problem is that you cannot get it on your own. You can try, but you will fail."

"You see, people can not get Eternal Life on their own. They can try to be good enough, they can try to pray enough, they can even go to church a lot and even believe that there IS a God, but that is not enough. The Bible says, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Our sins (our mistakes) get in the way."

"You see, we have all been given a limited amount on time on earth to try to 'figure things out' and in the same way I gave you a limited amount of time to work on that box, about seven or eight minutes to be exact, and you also could not 'figure it out.' It's the same with Eternal Life. The Bible says, "you must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect." Perfection is the standard, and we all fail. So that is a problem.

But God loves us, and wants us to be with Him. He wants us to have life, and have it abundantly both here on earth and forever for eternity with Him. In the same way you asked for my help and trusted me to help you open the box, we must do that with Christ. Jesus is saying "would you like my help? Will you trust in me instead of yourself?" When you say "yes" and you transfer your trust from yourself to Jesus for Eternal life, then, and only then, is that free gift yours to use.

The dollar explains it all by itself. "In God We Trust." The Bible explains it further by saying: "For by grace, you have been saved by faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God. Not of works, lest anyone should boast." In other words, you don't get to brag about getting the dollar, because you got it from me, not on your own. Eternal life is also not gotten on your own. It is given to us by the grace of God. You must trust God and put your faith in God. You see, the key to heaven, the key to eternal life, the key to a personal relationship with God is 'Faith' and that faith must be in what Christ has done for you."

You may end there if you are merely reinforcing a message to a church audience. However, if you are working with someone who does not understand what it is that Christ has done you may fill in the blanks by explaining further. Explain that Christ was both God and Man, that he died to pay the penalty for our sins and rose again to purchase a place for us in heaven. You will know your audience and what is necessary to say. In the meantime the above is a solid outline that can be stripped down or fleshed out depending on the needs of your audience.

Some interaction tips:

You may need to remind the volunteer that you told them that getting the dollar bill out of the box was NOT a requirement for ownership; it was merely a puzzle or "just for fun." If that is not clear, they will often forget and say, "it belongs to you," when prompted.

You should explain to the volunteer that this is a personal task. In other words, do it alone, do not share it with anyone. Groups of people are much quicker at opening the box than people working solo. Plus, it works better for the metaphor.

You may need to also explain that though the box can be broken into, breaking the box is not necessary. It simply "opens." Removing the decorative red plastic will not help you open the box, it will merely break part of it. Don't break it. Adults are the worst at this.

One in twenty people can open it in under 10 minutes. If a given person cannot open it in twenty minutes, they probably never will. Giving your volunteer between 5 and 10 minutes seems to be a fair shake and it's a pretty safe bet that they will not open it.