



GOSPEL CENTERED
LIFE & CHURCH

 north
central
CHURCH

The good news is that God himself has come to rescue and renew creation in and through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.



What is the Gospel?



WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

THE GOSPEL

Before we jump into gospel-centeredness we need to be clear about the gospel itself. In the simplest of terms the gospel is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus that accomplishes redemption and restoration for all who believe and all of creation. In his life Jesus fulfilled the law and accomplished all righteousness on behalf of sinners who have broken God's law at every point. In his death Jesus atones for our sins, satisfying the wrath of God and obtaining forgiveness for all who believe. In his resurrection Jesus' victory over sin and death is the guarantee of our victory over the same in and through him. Jesus' saving work not only redeems sinners, uniting them to God, but also assures the future restoration of all creation. This is the gospel, the "good news," that God redeems a fallen world by his grace.

GOSPEL-CENTERED: THE BIG PICTURE

Therefore, to be gospel-centered means that that the gospel – and Jesus himself – is our greatest hope and boast, our deepest longing and joy, and our most passionate song and message. It means that the gospel is what defines us as Christians, unites us as brothers and sisters, changes us as sinner/saints and sends us as God's people on mission. When we are gospel-centered the gospel is exalted above every other good thing in our lives and triumphs over every bad thing set against it.



THE GOSPEL IS NOT GOOD ADVICE, IT IS GOOD NEWS

There is a big difference between just good advice and good news. What is it you ask? Advice is counsel about something to do and it hasn't happened yet, but you can do it. News is a report about something that has happened—you can't do anything about it—it's been done for you and all you can do is respond to it. The gospel is good news, not good advice because the gospel is based on historical events in a way that other religions just aren't.

All other religions give advice, and they drive everything you're doing on fear. Now think this out: here is a king and he goes into a battle against an invading army to defend his land. If the king defeats the invading army he sends back to the capital city messengers, very happy envoy. He sends back, "good news-ers" with his report. They come back and they say, "It has been defeated! It's all been done! Therefore respond with joy and now go about your lives. Conduct your lives in this peace which has been achieved for you."

But if the invading army breaks through, the king sends back military advisers and says, "Swordsmen over here and marksmen over here and the horsemen over here. We're going to have to fight for our lives." Dr. Lloyd-Jones says that every other religion sends military advisers to people. Every other religion says, "You know, if you want your salvation, you're going to have to fight for your life." Every other religion is sending advice, saying, "Here are the rights, here are the rituals, and here are the laws and regulations. Fight for your life."

But the gospel is different.

We send heralds; we send messengers, not military advisers.



THE GOSPEL IS NOT GOOD ADVICE, IT IS GOOD NEWS cont'd

It doesn't mean there's nothing to do about it. Both messengers and military advisers get an enormous response. However, one is a response of joy, and one is a response of fear. All other religions give advice, and they drive everything you're doing on fear.

You know what, when you hear the gospel, when you hear a message that it's all been done for you, that it's a historical event that's happened, your salvation is accomplished for you, what do you want to do? You want to obey the Ten Commandments, you want to pray, and you want to please the one who did this for you. If on the other hand, you send military advisers who say, "You're going to have to live a really, really, good life if you want to get to heaven." What are you going to do? You're going to want to pray, you're going to want to obey the Ten Commandments—it looks the same doesn't it? [But] for two radically different reasons: one is joy; one is fear. In the end, in the short run, they look alike. But in the long run, one leads to burnout, self-righteousness, guilt and all sorts of problems. Isn't that fascinating?

If we were saying, "Here's how to live in the right way" —if that's the primary message, I'm not sure words are not necessarily the best thing to send. You want to send a model. If I were teaching an advanced seminar on preaching, I would make everyone read C.S. Lewis' *Studies in Words*. It's amazing, because Christians are wordsmiths and he shows you how important it is to craft your words properly. . . .

Therefore, if you believe that the gospel is good news, declarative preaching, verbally proclaiming, will always be irreplaceably central to what we do.



Gospel Centered Life & Church



A GOSPEL CENTERED LIFE

This Gospel has far-reaching implications for Christians beyond salvation.

Christians should live Gospel-centered lives. Believers are saved by the Gospel and called to live by the Gospel. The Gospel is for all of life. Not only should every Christian have a clear understanding of the Gospel but they should also apply it to every area of the Christian life. The Gospel is to be applied to every area of thinking, feeling, relating, working, and behaving. Christians must never move beyond the Gospel. C.J. Mahaney writes that believers should memorize the Gospel, pray the Gospel, sing the Gospel, review how the Gospel has changed our lives, and finally we should continually study the Gospel. This is the reason why the Gospel is the foundation for discipleship.

There is an important connection between the Gospel and discipleship. Our theology has a direct effect on our ministry and discipleship. In many ways, our discipleship is the fruit of our theology. In other words, the way we “behave” is just a symptom of what we really “believe” . Therefore, church leaders can use church growth principles to add people to the church, but only the Gospel can grow people into disciples of Jesus Christ.

More specifically, the gospel-centered life is a life where a Christian experiences a growing personal reliance on the gospel that protects him from depending on his own religious performance and being seduced and overwhelmed by idols. The gospel centered life produces:

Confidence (Heb. 3:14; 4:16)

When the gospel is central in our lives we have confidence before God-



A GOSPEL CENTERED LIFE cont'd

not because of our achievements, but because of Christ's atonement. We can approach God knowing that he receives us as his children. We do not allow our sins to anchor us to guilt and despair, but their very presence in our lives compels us to flee again and again to Christ for grace that restores our spirits and gives us strength.

Intimacy (Heb. 7:25; 10:22; James 4:8)

When the gospel is central in our lives we have and maintain intimacy with God, not because of our religious performance, but because of Jesus' priestly ministry. We know that Jesus is our mediator with God the Father and that he has made perfect peace for us through his sacrifice allowing us to draw near to God with the eager expectation of receiving grace, not judgment.

Transformation (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13)

When the gospel is central in our lives we experience spiritual transformation, not just moral improvement, and this change does not come about by our willpower, but by the power of the resurrection. Our hope for becoming what God designed and desires for us is not trying harder, but trusting more – relying on his truth and Spirit to sanctify us.

Community (Heb. 3:12, 13; 10:25; 2 Tim 3:16, 17)

When the gospel is central in our lives we long for and discover unity with other believers in the local church, not because of any cultural commonality, but because of our common faith and Savior. It is within this covenant community, if the community itself is gospel-centered, that we experience the kind of fellowship that comforts the afflicted, corrects the wayward, strengthens the weak, and encourages the disheartened.



A GOSPEL CENTERED CHURCH

A gospel-centered church is a church that is about Jesus above everything else. That sounds a little obvious, but when we talk about striving to be and maintain gospel-centrality as a church we are recognizing our tendency to focus on many other things (often good and important things) instead of Jesus. There are really only two options for local churches; they will be gospel-centered, or issue driven.

Issue-driven churches can be conservative or liberal, and come from any denominational tribe. A church can get the gospel “right” on paper and still not be gospel-centered in practice.

Some churches are driven by doctrinal purity. In the pursuit of the truth it is not uncommon for a church to be more about their theological heritage than the founder and perfecter of our faith. Some churches are driven by numbers. The desire to see as many people as possible trust in Christ can lead to a pragmatism that gives the nod to anything that results in more people in the front door. Some churches are driven by a desire to be culturally relevant, while other churches are focused on how culturally distinct they can remain. In both cases something other than the cross is capturing the attention of the congregation. Some churches are driven by social or spiritual works that, while good, begin to eclipse the point of all good works.

Gospel-centered churches do not forsake these things, but they are not driven by them. They are driven by a love for Jesus and his work on our behalf. Therefore gospel-centered churches are so focused on Jesus and the hope of redemption that they are passionate and articulate about their theology. Their



A GOSPEL CENTERED CHURCH cont'd

desire to know and make known Jesus demands doctrinal precision and leads them to want and work toward as many people as possible repenting of sin and trusting in Christ. When the gospel is central in a church it leads them out into the world on mission, while preserving their counter-cultural character as the people of God. The gospel-centered church is driven by love (for God and others) and this leads to joyful obedience that points back to God.

In saying this I don't want to suggest that we don't struggle with being issue driven. That temptation is always present, and it is why we work hard to maintain gospel-centrality by keeping the gospel always before us in our work and worship.



A PICTURE OF A GOSPEL CENTERED CHURCH

As a Church, we must be Gospel-centered in all our endeavors for the glory of God. This takes on a variety of forms but include the following:

- The Lordship of Jesus Christ and His Gospel is what it is all about. It is why we exist as the people of God.
- Being “Gospel-centered” means we are “grace-centered.” It means loving the people Jesus loves and reaching out to those rejected and even scorned by the Pharisees of our day. Legalism by the Pharisees of our day embedded in our traditions to which we are often blind must be exposed, confessed, and repented of. A Gospel-centered agenda can make this happen.
- Being Gospel-centered means we proclaim Christ’s victory over death, hell, the grave, and sin by his substitutionary atonement and glorious resurrection. We must be Gospel- centered for our justification, our sanctification and our glorification. We must be Gospel- centered from beginning to end.
- Pursuing in all things the “glory of God” means we will be theocentric and not anthropocentric in our worship and work. The supremacy of God in Christ through the Spirit in all things must be the engine that drives us.
- A radically Gospel-centered life will ensure that the bloody cross of a crucified King is the offense to non-believers not our styles, traditions, legalisms, moralisms, preferences, and sourpuss attitudes!



A PICTURE OF A GOSPEL CENTERED CHURCH cont'd

- A radically Gospel-centered life will promote a grace-filled salvation from beginning to end putting on display the beauty of the Gospel in all of life's aspects. It will remind us that we do not obey in order to be accepted. We obey because we are accepted by God in Christ!
- Once more an attractive and contagious joy in Jesus will draw people to the Savior whose glory radiates through transformed lives made new in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).
- Too many of our pulpits have jettisoned the proclamation of the Gospel. Too many of our people have lost the meaning and therefore the wonder of the Gospel. We must get it right once again if we are to experience a Great Commission Resurgence. No Gospel, no Great Commission Resurgence. It really is that simple.
- Maintaining Christ as the center of loves and the ultimate object of our worship, forfeiting all other loves and purging our functional saviors. .



Gospel Centered Worship & Discipleship



CORE FOUNDATIONS OF GOSPEL CENTERED WORSHIP

WORSHIP DEFINED

(Let's) unpack one more definition of worship, keeping in mind that we'll never exhaust the meaning and wonder of worshipping our Creator and Redeemer, even in eternity. Biblical worship is God's covenant people recognizing, reveling in, and responding rightly to the glory of God in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Biblical worship...to separate what we do as Christians from all other types of worship. This also implies that God is the One who determines how we should worship Him. (Jn. 4:23-24)

Is God's covenant people...God's plan from the beginning of creation has been to redeem a people for his own possession who would give him glory endlessly. The basis of our relationship with Him is His unchanging character, His unfailing love, and His unrepeatable sacrifice for our sins. (Ex. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 5:9-10)

Recognizing...This implies mental awareness and perception, as opposed to a highly individualized emotional encounter. (Ex. 34:6-7, Jer. 9:23-24)

Reveling in...One of the definitions for "revel" is "to get great pleasure from." It is in that sense that we "revel" in God's glory in Christ. When we find our highest joy, pleasure, satisfaction, and good in knowing God, we are worshipping Him. Although worshipping God involves more than our emotions, it doesn't involve less. (Ps. 32:11, 37:4; 1 Pet. 1:8-9)



GOSPEL CENTERED WORSHIP

THE CENTRAL THEME OF WORSHIP: THE CROSS

The gospel is not merely one of many possible themes we can touch on as we come to worship God. It is the central and foundational theme. All our worship originates and is brought into focus at the cross of Jesus Christ.

Glorying in Jesus Christ means glorying in his cross. That doesn't mean looking at some icon or two pieces of wood nailed together. Nor does it imply that every song we sing has the word cross in it. It has little to do with church gatherings that are more like a funeral than a celebration.

The cross stands for all that was accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God. It focuses on his substitutionary death at Calvary but includes everything that gave meaning to that act. His preexistent state in glory. His incarnation. His life of perfect obedience. His suffering. His resurrection. His ascension. His present intercession and reign in glory. His triumphant return.

INTELLECTUAL

We are called to worship the Lord with our minds by renewing them and fixing them on him. (Colossians 3:1-2)

REPENTANCE

Where there is no repentance, there may be an emotional experience, but it's not worship! Worship does not become worship until it changes the way we live!

INTENTIONAL

No one accidentally follows Christ. If we are going to worship him, it will be done purposefully!



GOSPEL CENTERED WORSHIP

cont'd

RELATIONAL

Worship affects every relationship we have. It is impossible to be a fully devoted worshiper of Christ while not reflecting His character in our relationships with others.

FINANCIAL

Until following Christ has affected our finances in a sacrificial way, chances are, we are not followers of Christ with our whole heart. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).

UNCONDITIONAL

Worship is not contingent upon our current circumstances but upon our continual recognition of God's infinite value and worth in comparison to humanity's broken and fallen state.

EMOTIONAL

Worship is overwhelming when we realize that Jesus has rescued us while we were deeply entrenched in sin, when we realize how helpless we are and how incredible he is.



CORE FOUNDATIONS OF GOSPEL CENTERED WORSHIP cont'd

And responding rightly...There are countless wrong ways to respond to God, including ungratefulness, anger, and idolatry. Our right responses include both adoration and action, both what we do in specific meetings as well as in all of life. (Rom. 12:1-2; Heb. 10:24-25; Heb. 13:15-16)

To God's glory in Christ...We have been saved to see that God's glory has been most clearly revealed in the person and work of His Son. (2 Cor. 4:6) This is a precious truth that we must proclaim and protect. (Heb. 1:1-3)

In the power of the Holy Spirit...While they may disagree on the application, Charismatics and cessationists can both affirm that the worship of God is impossible apart from the power of God's Spirit. (John 4:23-24; Eph. 2:18)



GOSPEL CENTERED DISCIPLESHIP

There is an important connection between the Gospel and discipleship. Our theology has a direct effect on our ministry and discipleship. In many ways, our discipleship is the fruit of our theology. In other words, the way we “behave” is just a symptom of what we really “believe”. Therefore, church leaders can use church growth principles to add people to the church, but only the Gospel can grow people into disciples of Jesus Christ.

In fact, there are some core foundations taught in Scripture that inform the process of Gospel centered discipleship.

1. Christian discipleship is the ongoing transformation of an individual becoming like Jesus in character and purpose as he or she grows in intimacy with Christ (see Matt. 5:48; Eph. 4:13-15; Phil. 2:5).
2. Christian discipleship addresses every dimension of life. It is concerned not only with doing the right thing in every circumstance but also with doing the right thing for the right reason (see Phil. 1:27).
3. Christian discipleship is progressive in nature. When someone stops growing in intimacy with Christ, he or she ceases to be healthy in their discipleship (see John 15:4).
4. Christian discipleship is a work of grace. It is the Holy Spirit who transforms life, not someone who tries to be good. The term disciplined grace describes this process. While God transforms, a believer’s spiritual practice creates the transforming environment in which the Holy Spirit works (see Phil. 2:13; 1 Tim. 4:7-8).



GOSPEL CENTERED DISCIPLESHIP

5. Christian discipleship always manifests itself in ministry to others. Every Christian has been spiritually gifted for the purpose to serve (see 1 pet. 4:10).
6. Christian discipleship was intended by Christ to be reproductive. Those who follow Jesus' life and teaching will be prepared to eagerly share their faith experiences and to invest themselves in the spiritual nurture of others (see Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2).
7. Christian discipleship is centered in the life of the local church, where fellowship of other disciples encourages, teaches, and safeguards the believer's discipleship process (see Heb. 10:24-25).⁶



KEY FAILURES IN NON-GOSPEL CENTERED DISCIPLESHIP

1. Focus more on Bible teaching than Bible engagement. “We learned that the most effective strategy for moving people forward in their journey of faith is biblical engagement. Not just getting people into the Bible when they’re in church—which we do quite well—but helping them engage the Bible on their own outside of church.”
2. Haven’t developed a pathway of focused first steps. “Instead of offering up a wide-ranging menu of ministry opportunities to newcomers, best-practice churches promote and provide a high-impact, nonnegotiable pathway of focused first steps—a pathway designed specifically to jumpstart a spiritual experience that gets people moving toward a Christ-centered life.”
3. More concerned about activity than growth. “Increased church activity does not lead to spiritual growth.”
4. Haven’t clarified the church’s role. “Because—whether inadvertently or intentionally—these churches have communicated to their people that, no matter where they are on their spiritual journey, the role of the church is to be their central source of spiritual expertise and experience. As a result, even as people mature in their beliefs and embrace personal spiritual practices as part of their daily routines, their expectation is that it will be the church, not their own initiative, that will feed their spiritual hunger.”
5. Focused more on small groups than serving. “Serving experiences appear to be even more significant to spiritual development than organized small groups.”



KEY FAILURES IN NON-GOSPEL CENTERED DISCIPLESHIP cont'd

6. Not challenging people to reflect on Scripture. “If they could do only one thing to help people at all levels of spiritual maturity grow in their relationship with Christ, their choice would be equally clear. They would inspire, encourage, and equip their people to read the Bible—specifically, to reflect on Scripture for meaning in their lives.”
7. Unwilling to admit that ‘more’ does not mean ‘better’. “Based on findings from the most effective churches, however, this ‘more is better’ way of thinking is not the best route for people who are new to a church, and it is particularly unsuitable for people who are taking their first steps to explore the Christian faith...Instead of offering a ministry buffet with multiple tempting choices of activities and studies, these churches make one singular pathway a virtual prerequisite for membership and full engagement with the church.”
8. Haven’t raised the bar recently. “Too many churches are satisfied to have congregations filled with people who say they ‘belong’ to their church—who attend faithfully and are willing to serve or make a donation now and then. But that belonging bar is not high enough; simply belonging doesn’t get the job done for Jesus.”
9. Created a church staff dependency. “Taking too much responsibility for others’ spiritual growth fostered an unhealthy dependence of congregants on the church staff.”



KEY FAILURES IN NON-GOSPEL CENTERED DISCIPLESHIP cont'd

10. Believe that small groups are the solution to spiritual formation. “Based on the churches we have studied, including our own, there is no evidence that getting 100 percent of a congregation into small groups is an effective spiritual formation strategy.”

11. Focus on what people should do rather than who people should become. “Unfortunately, churches often make things harder still by obscuring the goal—to become more like Christ—with a complicated assortment of activities. For instance, encouraging people to: Attend teaching and worship services every week. Meet frequently with small community and Bible study groups (often requiring follow-up communications and homework). Serve the church a couple times a month. Serve those who are under resourced on a regular basis. Invite friends, coworkers, and family to church, special events, support groups, etc. When the church incessantly promotes all the things people should do, it’s very easy for them to lose sight of the real goal—which is who they should become.”

12. Ask people to surrender their lives to church, but aren’t actually helping them surrender their lives to Jesus. “Spiritual growth is not driven or determined by activities; it is defined by a growing relationship with Christ. So the goal is not to launch people into an assortment of ministry activities; it is to launch them on a quest to embrace and surrender their lives to Jesus.”



Gospel Centered Mission & Service



CORE FOUNDATIONS OF GOSPEL CENTERED MISSION

MISSIO DEI

“Our mission has not life of its own: only in the hands of the sending God can it truly be called mission. Not least since the missionary initiative comes from God alone ... mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love.”

The Bible is packed full of examples of how our God is on a mission to restore fallen humanity to himself. Christopher Wright goes as far as to say, “Mission is what the Bible is all about; we could as meaningfully talk of the missional basis of the Bible as of the biblical basis of mission.” Theologians have long identified that our role is less to start mission than to recognize and in response join in with God’s mission to the world (or *Missio Dei*, a Latin phrase that literally translates as “the sending of God”).

In each of the four Gospels, Jesus makes it clear that his disciples are to go to the lost and that we are to make that the center of how we think, love, and live (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48; John 15:26-27). Reading Acts, we see that missional driver highlighted repeatedly (Acts 1:8; 13:2; 14:1, 21; 16:9, 13, 32, etc.). Paul, for instance, clearly saw reaching out in mission as the primary filter for all his decisions and actions (e.g., Philippians 3:12-14). As has been humorously put, when we become Christians, there are two things we can do on earth that we won’t be able to do in heaven: sin and witness. The question for us is to decide which one we think Jesus left us here to do.



CORE FOUNDATIONS OF GOSPEL CENTERED MISSION cont'd

"God has sent us on his grand mission. You are the most effective missionary to the people you live, work, and play with. You need not fear the disapproval of man because you have the enduring approval of God in Christ. You do not need the power of coercion or right answers because the power for salvation does not rest in methods but in the gospel itself: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16)."

A lot of Christian terms get thrown around. "Mission" is definitely one of those terms. Mission is key to the church, and should be valued and practiced by a church that wants to be faithful to Scripture. Gospel centered mission can be defined as: Glorifying God by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus for the sake of gathering God's people to him. There are 4 key truths about mission throughout the gospel of John that will help us be better missionaries for Jesus in our context.

INCARNATION (EXAMPLE OF MISSION)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. (John 1:14-16)

Jesus is the greatest example of a missionary. The incarnation of Jesus (God becoming a man) gives us the example of contextualization. Jesus came from the culture of heaven to the culture of earth. He ate their food, wore their clothes,



CORE FOUNDATIONS OF GOSPEL CENTERED MISSION cont'd

spoke their language, went to parties, had friends, and worked a job. He learned the culture, and engaged the people in his context. He also helps us understand we are to come in grace and truth. This means that we come humbly and full of compassion. We listen to people, show interest in them, and care for them just as Jesus did. However, this also means we will call out sin, hate sin, fight against the culture's idols, and proclaim the redemption of God through Jesus. We need to dwell among the people in our city, proclaiming God's grace and truth.

SALVATION (HEART OF MISSION)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:16-17)

These two verses show us God's heart behind his mission. He wants to see people saved. God desires that people believe in the life, death, and resurrection of his Son for eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to condemn us (for we already were because of sin), but to save us.

GLORY OF GOD (PURPOSE OF MISSION)

"Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24)

Our purpose for mission should be aligned with Jesus' purpose for mission: to



CORE FOUNDATIONS OF GOSPEL CENTERED MISSION cont'd

glorify God. Our main motive for spreading the gospel is to see people come under the rule of Christ. We want to see the glory of God made known to the world. God desires that the world be full of the knowledge of his glory. When we join him on mission we faithfully desire to see him glorified through the proclamation of the gospel.

SPIRIT EMPOWERED (POWER OF MISSION)

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending "you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:21)

We receive authority from Jesus himself because he himself has all authority (Matthew 28:18-20). Just as the Father sent the Son, and the Father and Son send the Spirit, so the Son and the Spirit send and empower us for mission. This is our source of power for the mission. We have the Holy Spirit of God to empower us to witness to the nations of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

Faithful in Mission

Gospel centered mission is key to the vibrancy and health of the local church. We are commanded by Jesus to be faithful missionaries who understand our context, have passion to see the lost saved, for the glory of God, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.



GOSPEL CENTERED SERVICE

WITNESS AND SERVICE

As we see Jesus entering the brokenness of the world and asking for a response in two distinct ways:

- He wants people who don't know him yet to come to know him (to experience the healing and restoration of that relationship), and
- He also wants to see systems of injustice brought to an end. As NT Wright says, Jesus came "to put the world to rights."

There is witness. There is service.

Very often, the best way to engage with a community is by living out the presence and values of the Kingdom. We identify where there is a need that we can meet and do so. This builds our credibility with those we are reaching and allows the Holy Spirit to soften our hearts as we humble ourselves in that way. It has been said that people don't care how much we know until they know how much we care, so finding ways to serve is the Kingdom way to reach that breakthrough point.

Our service does not have to be an amazing venture that the grateful locals are still going to be talking about decades later. But as we go with a servant's heart, the Lord will bring people and opportunities across our paths in order to train and direct us. Our eyes will be opened to see a more strategic and longer-term pattern of service in that context. As we follow that guidance, this will then



GOSPEL CENTERED SERVICE cont'd

momentum, bear fruit, and genuinely begin to change that mission context in tangible ways.

We tend to think of service primarily as an event, rather than seeing service through the lens of process. Once we see the process aspect as primary, we release much of the pressure off ourselves to produce the best event ever, focusing more on serving the real needs of those we are trying to reach, however unspectacular that may feel to us.



GOSPEL QUOTES

“Too many Christians look to clear their evangelistic conscience by simply mentioning the name of Jesus or saying that he died on the cross for sins. Saying Jesus’ name in conversation earns us a $\sqrt{}$. Mentioning what Jesus did (on the cross) earns us a $\sqrt{+}$. This performance-based approach to evangelism is incredible because it fails to embody the truth we preach.”

“The gospel is both bigger and smaller than we think. Sometimes we can’t imagine the scope of the gospel, as news so good that it changes everything — society, culture, and creation. People really need to hear this. This vision of reality is better than anyone can imagine.”

“The gospel is bigger and smaller than we think, as big as the cosmos and as small as you and me. It is the good and true news that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and evil through his own death and resurrection and is making all things new, even us!”

“All disciples are called to evangelism, but an evangelist isn’t someone who coughs up information about Jesus or proselytizes people. According to Paul, an evangelist is someone who communicates the gospel of Jesus with patience and wisdom.”

“The Church isn’t meant to bear the weight of our spiritual hunger for security and relational connectedness. God is — Father, Son and Spirit.”

“The gospel is not about recruitment to a cause or community; it is about regeneration to a new Savior and Lord.”



GOSPEL QUOTES cont'd

"I am advocating that we share the true gospel, namely that Jesus is the Christ and the one, true Lord, the only Messiah that redeems from sin and the true King that reigns over all. The gospel is news about the good and true story that Jesus has defeated sin, death, and evil through his own death and resurrection and is making all things new, even us."

"Biblical faith is not in a new set of beliefs and friends; it is much deeper than that. It is a shift that comes about through an exchange of one identity for another, from an old identity to a new identity 'in Christ.'"

"Preachy self-righteousness says: "If you perform well (morally or spiritually), God will accept you." But the gospel says, "God already accepts you because Jesus performed perfectly on your behalf." There's a hell of a difference between the two. The gospel sets us free from performance and releases us into the arms of grace. Self-wrought performance is a death sentence, but the obedience of Christ on our behalf is eternal life."

"Grace is God working his way down to us, so that we don't have to work our way up to him. He comes down to us in Jesus. We need to make Jesus the stumbling block, not preachy self-righteousness or spiritual performance."

"The gospel helps us see ourselves as we are, but offers us an entirely new image, the image of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. If we give up on ourselves and give into Jesus, he'll exchange our darkness for his light, our distortion for his beauty. This is news worth sharing."



GOSPEL QUOTES cont'd

“You see, we all need fresh encounters with Jesus for our evangelism to ring with authenticity. We need fresh encounters with Jesus to remain our authentic selves. Otherwise, we will begin to treat people as projects to be avoided or recruited. Evangelism will become a way to judge or praise ourselves. Apart from the gospel, evangelism will become a measuring stick not an overflow of joy in Christ.”

“Christianity is utterly unique, not because Christians are better but because Christ is better. In Christianity, God dies so man can live. In other religions, generally speaking, men live in the uncertain hope that they won't really die. In the gospel, God works his way down to us in Jesus to bear our load and give us his life. In religion, man works his way up to God bearing an unbearable load with a vague hope of eternal life.”

“Our reluctance to talk about Jesus often springs from honoring the approval of others in our hearts instead of resting our hearts in the approval of Christ the Lord.”

“Adoption reminds us that salvation is warm, personal, and full of love. When we fail the Father, it is not as if he disapprovingly looks down from heaven shaking his finger. Because we are in Christ, he stands in front of us with arms wide open. He beckons us home. My goodness, like the father of the prodigal, he runs to us in reckless love (Luke 15:20)!”

“The more we “honor Christ the Lord in our hearts”, resting in his perfect approval, the less our hearts will treasure the approval or applause of others. The more we run our hearts under the waterfall of the heart-thrilling truth of



GOSPEL QUOTES cont'd

adoption, the more we will overflow in humble confidence, not fear or arrogance. We will be less concerned about right answers and more concerned about Christ. Jesus is the better, more merciful Master and the gospel, the infinitely better idea. Jesus provides an impenetrable security and the gospel, an unwavering confidence.”

REFERENCES

Bevins, Winfield. *Grow: Reproducing Through Organic Discipleship*. 2012. Exponential.

Breen, Mike; Alex Absalom. *Launching Missional Communities*. 2010. 3DM.

Dodson, Jonathan. *UnBelievable Gospel 2012*. Rocket Republic eBook.

Hawkins, Greg; Parkinson, Cally. *Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth*.

Keller, Timothy. *Gospel Centered Ministry* <http://theresurgence.com/2007/06/26/gospel-centered-ministry-audio>

Noble, Perry. *7 Things That Worship Is*. 2012. TheResurgence.

Thorn Joe, *Gospel Centered* , <http://www.joethorn.net/2009/08/11/gospel-centered/>

Ventry Garrett, *Defining Gospel Centered Mission*, www.GospelCenteredDiscipleship.com

