



**The Gospel
Centered Life**

CCR'S Spiritual Growth Campaign

2018

By Louie Marsh & Amy Campbell



Hello and welcome to, *The Gospel Centered Life*, our Spiritual Growth Campaign for 2018.

This year we're doing things a bit differently from past years. Our devotions are much shorter and are designed to get you thinking. A quick hit six days a week to help your mind and heart stay focused on the Gospel.

These devotions will also be appearing on CCR's FaceBook page, so please be sure to like and share them everyday on Facebook to help spread the word and multiply the ministry of CCR.

You'll also find our outline for our Small Groups here as well. We've simplified the flow of the groups somewhat. We hope these lessons will be a powerful boost to your understanding of the Gospel of Jesus.

The videos that accompany the outlines will be available on YouTube as well as on DVD, please check with the church office if you need DVD's.

Thanks for taking the time to be part of this, and we pray *The Gospel Centered Life* will be a huge blessing and a real milestone in your spiritual life.



**The Gospel
Centered Life**

Small Group Lesson Outlines



The Gospel Centered Life Mid-Week Lessons

LESSON ONE: The Gospel Grid



Open in Prayer & Discuss:

- What is the Gospel? (if unsure refer to Louie's Sermon from 12-31-2017)
- How is your spiritual life at this point? Growing, stagnant or declining? Why do you think or feel that way?

The Lesson

BIG IDEA

⁶ *which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, Colossians 1:6 (ESV)*

If the Gospel is bearing fruit and increasing then that means it ties into every part of our lives. God, humanity, salvation, worship, relationships, shopping, having fun, work, our personality – everything!

1) Christians use the word Gospel without _____ it.

The Gospel Is...

The _____ of God

¹⁶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16 (ESV)*

The _____ of our personal transformation.

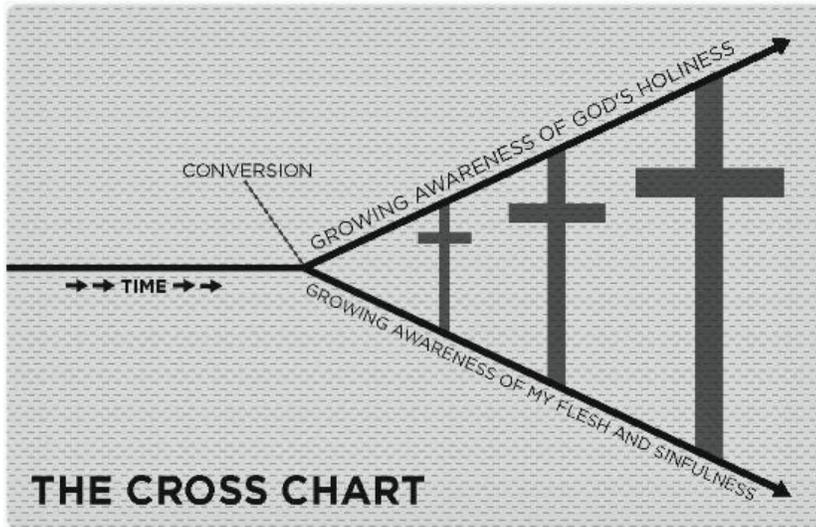
⁸ *For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so near-sighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 2 Peter 1:8-9 (ESV)*

The Gospel sets me free from sin's _____.

¹ *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. Romans 6:1-4 (ESV)*

2) My understanding & experience of this takes a _____

² Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—
 1 Peter 2:2 (ESV)



When I see my sinfulness & God’s Goodness I begin to see two things clearly:

I see _____

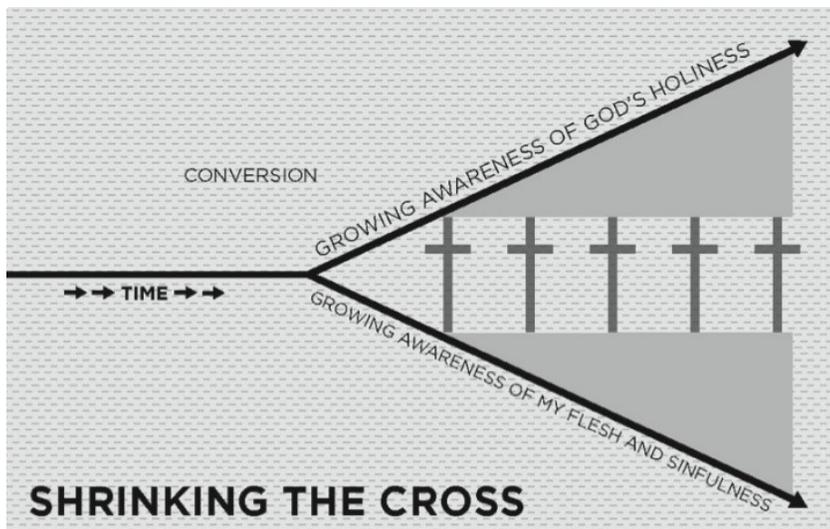
⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9 (ESV)

I see _____

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? ¹⁰ “I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.” Jeremiah 17:9-10 (ESV)

3) I must avoid my natural tendency to _____.



This happens when I do either of these...

- _____ **God's perfect holiness.**
- _____ **my own righteousness.**

Growing in the Gospel means _____ as our perfect Redeemer.

³⁰ *And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 1 Corinthians 1:30 (ESV)*

APPLICATION EXERCISE – JUDGING OTHERS

One way to see the value of the Cross Chart is to apply to a specific area where we all struggle. Judging others is something we all do. As a group brainstorm some of the specific ways we judge people. The questions below will help you see the connection between judging others and your view of the Gospel.

1. What are the specific ways we judge others?
2. Why do we judge others? What reasons do we give for doing this?
3. How do these reasons reflect a small view of God holiness?
4. How do these reasons reflect a small view of our own sin?
5. Think of a specific person in your life that you are often judgmental toward:
 - How would a bigger view of God's holiness affect that relationship?
 - How would a bigger view of your sin affect that relationship?



Closing Prayer Time

The Gospel Centered Life Mid-Week Lessons
LESSON TWO: PRETENDING & PERFORMING



Open In Prayer & Discuss:

- Over the past week has the cross of Christ been growing in your life? How so?
- Why is it so hard for most people to admit they're wrong – with no excuses?

BIG IDEA

This lesson deals with how we “shrink the cross,” which means that something is lacking in our understanding, appreciation or application of Jesus’ sacrifice for our sin. This manifests itself in two main ways: **pretending & performing**. Pretending minimizes sin by making ourselves out to be something we’re not. Performing minimizes God’s holiness by reducing his standards to something we can do ourselves.

The Lesson

1) Spiritual growth is based on my _____

²⁴ *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* ²⁵ *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.* Romans 7:24-25 (ESV)

When the Gospel is functioning correctly in my life:

- My awareness of God’s Holiness should be growing – _____.

¹⁹ *God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?* Numbers 23:19 (ESV)

- My awareness of my sinfulness should be growing – _____.

¹⁵ *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.* 1 Timothy 1:15 (ESV)

- I become more aware of just how deep & strong my _____.

- This awareness grows even as I _____.

2) If we aren't anchored in Jesus' righteousness, awareness of our sin becomes crushing and we compensate by either _____.

The Seven Ways of Minimizing My Sin (Pretending)

DEFENDING – I have a hard time admitting weakness or sin so I defend. I explain things away and focus on past successes instead of current problems.

FAKING - I keep up appearances of doing well and maintain a good image. I avoid thinking about my own self and situation so much I might even be fooling myself.

HIDING – I conceal as much as possible about my life, especially the “bad stuff.” While faking is about impressing others (and myself), hiding is about **shame**. I don't think people (or God?) will accept or love the real me.

EXAGGERATING – I tend to think and talk about myself more highly than I ought. I make things, both good & bad, bigger than they are – usually to get attention.

BLAMING – I am quick to blame others for my sin and shortcomings. I have a hard time “owning” my contributions to my problems. There is an element of pride and/or fear of rejection here.

DOWNPLAYING – I give little weight to sins or circumstances in my life, saying they are “normal” or “not that bad,” or “I'm only human.” As a result, I don't change, things continue to slide until they mount up and become overwhelming.

COMPARING – I puff up my own sense of righteousness by comparing myself to others who I think are doing worse, and reason that at least “I'm not as bad as those people”

3) If we don't fully grasp that we are accepted by God through Jesus, we will compensate by trying to _____ through performance.

Ask yourself, what do you count on to give you a sense of “personal credibility (validity, acceptance, good standing)?

4) These sources of righteousness focus on what _____ instead of what _____

Finding righteousness in these things leads us into *more* sin (judging, excluding others) not less!

Now, to reveal your tendency toward performance, pause and answer this question: as God thinks of you right now, what is the look on his face?

- If you imagined God as anything but satisfied because of what Jesus has done, you have fallen into a performance mindset.

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. (Galatians 4:6-7)

APPLICATION EXERCISE –

Discuss this list of typical sources of righteousness apart from Jesus and His Gospel. Feel free to add new ones.

JOB RIGHTEOUSNESS – I'm a hard worker, so God will reward me

FAMILY RIGHTEOUSNESS – I do things right as a parent. Unlike some parents, I care about how I raise my kids

THEOLOGICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS – I have good theology. God is more likely to use me over those with bad theology.

INTELLECTUAL RIGHTEOUSNESS – I am better read, more articulate, and more culturally savvy than others, which pleases God.

SCHEDULE RIGHTEOUSNESS – I am self-disciplined and rigorous in my time management, which makes me more mature than others.

FLEXIBILITY RIGHTEOUSNESS – In a world that's busy, I'm flexible and relaxed. I always make time for others. Shame on those who don't!

MERCY RIGHTEOUSNESS – I care about the poor and disadvantaged the way everyone else should.

LEGALISTIC RIGHTEOUSNESS – I don't drink, smoke, or chew, and I don't date or hangout with people who do. Too many Christians aren't concerned about holiness these days.

FINANCIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS – I manage money wisely and stay out of debt. I'm not materialistic like those who can't control their spending.

POLITICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS – How can people call themselves Christians and not vote for ___?

TOLERANCE RIGHTEOUSNESS – I am open-minded and tolerant with those who don't agree with me. In that way, I'm a lot like Jesus.



Close in Prayer



The Gospel Centered Life Mid-Week Lessons LESSON THREE: BELIEVING THE GOSPEL



Open in Prayer & Discuss:

- Is your spiritual growth balanced? Am I seeing both God's holiness, love and mercy *along with* my sinfulness? Or do I see more of one than the other? If so which one do you tend to see more of?
- What does being part of God's Family mean to you?

BIG IDEA

This lesson turns out attention to the positive: what remedies has God given in the Gospel to keep us from shrinking the cross and depending on our own efforts?

The Lesson

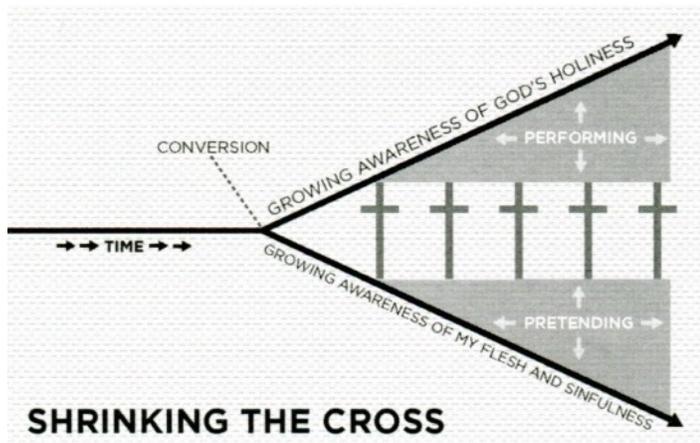
1) The Root of the Human Condition is a struggle for two things:

- _____
- _____

2) Because we are fallen people we seek these things the wrong way.

- By _____ & _____

³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Romans 10:3 (ESV)



- We must learn to _____ of this sinful pattern.

3) We must also embrace Christ's sacrifice as the _____.

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Romans 3:21-24 (ESV)

- In Christ we are both _____ & _____ (forgiven) into God's Family.

⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Romans 10:4 (ESV)

⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, Ephesians 1:5 (ESV)

One name for this is _____.

- We do _____ to be right with God for Christ has _____.

It is called "passive righteousness" because we do not have to labor for it... This passive righteousness is a mystery that someone who does not know Jesus cannot understand. In fact, Christians do not completely understand it and rarely take advantage of it in their daily lives... When there is any fear or our conscience is bothered, it is a sign that our "passive" righteousness is out of sight and Christ is hidden.

The person who wanders away from "passive righteousness" has no other choice but to live by "works" righteousness. If he does not depend on the work of Christ, he must depend on his own work. So we must teach and continually repeat the truth of this "passive" or "Christian" righteousness so that Christians continue to hold to it and never confuse it with "works" righteousness.

- Martin Luther (1483-1546), in the preface to his *Commentary on Galatians*

4) I find my true identity through my adoption into _____.

¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, Romans 8:15-16 (ESV)

5) So I must cling by faith to these truths and believe the Gospel by _____.

⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one

who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:⁷ “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” Romans 4:4-8 (ESV)

- Because this struggle is ongoing in my life I _____.

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. Galatians 4:4-7 (ESV)

SELF-ASSESSMENT:

Read thru the list. Under Orphan check the box is you see that tendency in yourself. Underline the words that most apply. Under Son/Daughter, check the boxes that describe where you most want to grow, underline key words. The group can then discuss everyone’s findings.

THE ORPHAN

- Lacks a vital daily intimacy with God
- Anxious about friends, money, school, grades, etc.
- Feels as if no one cares about you
- Lives on a success/fail basis
- Needs to look good
- Feels guilty and condemned
- Struggles to trust things to God
- Has to fix your problems
- Not very teachable
- Is defensive when accused of error or weakness
- Needs to be right
- Lacks confidence
- Feels discouraged and defeated
- Strong-willed with ideas, agendas, and opinions
- Solution to failure: “Try harder”
- Has a critical spirit (complaining and bitterness)
- Tears others down
- A “competent analyst” of others’ weaknesses
- Tends to compare yourself with others
- Feels powerless to defeat the flesh
- Needs to be in control of situations and others
- Looks for satisfaction in “positions”
- Looks for satisfaction in “possessions”
- Tends to be motivated by obligation and duty, not love

THE SON/DAUGHTER

- Feels freed from worry because of God’s love for you
- Learning to live in a daily partnership with God
- Not fearful of God
- Feels forgiven and totally accepted
- A daily trust in God’s sovereign plan for your life
- Prayer is a first resort
- Content in relationships b/c you are accepted by God
- Freedom from making a name for yourself
- Is teachable by others
- Open to criticism b/c you rest on Christ’s perfection
- Able to examine your deeper motives
- Able to take risks—even to fail
- Encouraged by the Spirit working in you
- Able to see God’s goodness in dark times
- Content with what Christ has provided
- Trusting less in self and more in the Holy Spirit
- Aware of inability to fix life, people, and problems
- Is able to freely confess your faults to others
- Doesn’t always have to be right
- Does not gain value from man-made “props”
- Experiences more and more victory over the flesh
- Prayer is a vital, ongoing part of the day
- Jesus is more and more the subject of conversation
- God truly satisfies your soul



**Close In
Prayer!**



The Gospel Centered Life Mid-Week Lessons LESSON FOUR: LAW & GOSPEL



Open in Prayer & Discuss:

- What part does God's Law play in your spiritual growth?
- In your opinion which is worse – legalism or licentiousness? Why?

BIG IDEA

We are still thinking about how the Gospel interacts with our lives, but now we are doing it by considering the Gospel's relationship to the law. What is the law? Does God expect me to obey it? What's the purpose of the law? How does the law help me believe the Gospel? These questions are before us in this lesson.

The Lesson

1) When I don't understand Law & Gospel I fall into one of two dangerous errors:

- _____

³ *Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Galatians 3:3 (ESV)*

- _____

¹⁵ *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Romans 6:15 (NIV)*

How God designed this to work:

- The Law drives us to the _____
- The Gospel frees us from sin so we can now _____

2) The Gospel shows me I'm _____ to God's Law.

²³ *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23 (NIV)*

¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” Galatians 3:10 (ESV)

3) Through faith in the Gospel I’m _____ from the curse of the Law.

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. Galatians 3:13-14 (ESV)

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (ESV)

4) Through Faith in Christ God sends the _____ to indwell & transform me.

⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Romans 5:5 (ESV)

¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1:13 (ESV)

5) The true Christian obeys God not out of duty but _____.

¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Romans 13:10 (ESV)

²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. James 1:25 (ESV)

⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Romans 10:4 (ESV)

EXERCISE – The Gospel Grid & the Law

A grid is a pattern for thinking, a filter to run things through, a particular way of looking at something. In Lesson One we talked about the Gospel Grid, using the Cross Chart. Now we’re going to apply that to help us understand the law.

Just about every Scripture passage asserts a moral imperative, either directly or indirectly. For instance, a verse may say don’t lie. You can respond to this in three different ways.

LEGALISM: I try my best not to lie. This is living under the law. In the end I discover not matter how hard I try and will still lie. This is true even when I lower the standards of what a lie is.

LICENSE: I admit from the start that I can't obey this command all the time and then dismiss it as a Biblical ideal I'm not actually expected to obey. God knows I'm going to sin and will forgive it so it's okay to lie "when I need too."

GOSPEL: This is the grid we want to apply. It goes like this:

God says, "Do not lie." (Top line of the Cross Chart: God's holiness).

I cannot obey this command because I am a sinner (bottom line of the chart: my sinfulness).

Jesus die obey this command perfectly. He fulfilled the Law by living perfectly, and paid the final price for my sin by substituting Himself for me on the cross.

Because Jesus lives in me and I'm accepted & adopted through Him and have His Holy Spirit, I am now free to obey the law through His grace and power.

PRACTICE (Read one passage at a time and discuss them as you apply the grid. Phil. 4: 4-7; James 2: 1-7; 1 Peter 3:9).

What is the command?

Why can't I do it? (Be specific about your particular struggles to obey this command).

How did Jesus do this perfectly? (Note specific examples from the Gospels.)

How can God's Spirit in you empower you to obey this command (in specific situations)?



Close in Prayer



The Gospel Centered Life Mid-Week Lessons LESSON FIVE: LIFESTYLE REPENTANCE



Open in Prayer & Discuss:

- What part does repentance play in your spiritual life?
- Do you think we tend to avoid talking about repentance today? Why or why not?

BIG IDEA

This lesson deal with repentance, which sound negative to most people but isn't. Biblical repentance is the norm for gospel-centered living. Becoming more aware of God's holiness and our sinfulness leads us to repent and believe the Gospel of Jesus. It frees us from our own devices and makes a way for the power of the Gospel to bear fruit in our lives. So today we want to expose the ways we practice counterfeit repentance and move us towards genuine repentance.

The Lesson

1) Repentance is a _____ of the Gospel.

¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:15 (ESV)

When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "repent"... He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance. First Martin Luther's 95 Theses

2) Human beings are great practitioners of _____.

• False repentance consists of two parts:

◇ _____ – I can't believe I did that, that's not me.

◇ _____ – I promise to do better next time.

Two main reasons behind false repentance:

- **We think _____ of ourselves** – we don't believe the depth of our brokenness

- We think we have the _____ ourselves – I'll try harder next time.

3) Real repentance consists of four characteristics:

- It's oriented toward God not me.

⁴ *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.* Psalm 51:4 (ESV)

- It's motivated by true Godly sorrow & not just selfish regret.

¹⁰ *For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.* 2 Corinthians 7:10 (ESV)

- It's concerned with the heart, not just with external actions.

¹⁰ *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* Psalm 51:10 (ESV)

- It looks to Jesus for deliverance from the penalty & power of sin.

¹⁹ *Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,* ²⁰ *that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,* Acts 3:19-20 (ESV)

4) So real repentance looks like this:

- I _____ – I did do that!
- Then I _____ – turn away from the sin, turn to God

¹⁹ *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.* Revelation 3:19 (ESV)

PRACTICING REPENTANCE

Here are some common excuses that we in false repentance and the inner thoughts we have when we use them. Look them over and then use the questions below to help each other practice real repentance.

- ◆ **I was just being honest** (Can you handle the truth?)
- ◆ **I was just saying what I really feel** (There's nothing sinful about my feelings)
- ◆ **I was only kidding** (Didn't you get my joke?)
- ◆ **I misunderstood you** (I'm not as bad as you think.)
- ◆ **That just who I am** (I'm a sinner, so that excuses my behavior.)
- ◆ **I made a mistake,** (Don't we all?)
- ◆ **I didn't mean to do it.**(I didn't mean to get caught.)
- ◆ **I'm having a bad day.** (I deserve better.)

1) Which of the excuses list above can you identify with?

2) What is a recent example, or a typical situation, when you used one of those excuses?

3) As a group describe below what true repentance would look like in these cases, using the steps below:

STEP 1: Acknowledge that you have sinned against God.

STEP 2: Confess forms for false repentance and selfish regret.

STEP 3: Discern and repent of the underlying heart motivations that drive you to this sin.

STEP 4: Rely upon God's power to turn you away from sin.

Repeat this process, working through as many responses as time allows.



Close in Prayer



The Gospel Centered Life Mid-Week Lessons

LESSON SIX: HEART IDOLATRY



Open in Prayer & Discuss:

- Is idolatry a real problem for Christians today in America? Why or why not?
- Can you think of any idols that you have in your life right now?

BIG IDEA

We've said that the Christian walk consists of two repeated steps: repentance and faith. In Lesson 5, we dealt with repentance. Now we turn our attention to the topic of faith. Remember, we grow through believing the gospel. That's the emphasis of this week's discussion and exercise. This week's goal is to take "believing the gospel" out of the abstract and make it concrete.

The Lesson

1) Consider this question: What one thing should I do to grow more as a Christian?

- The power of the Gospel is _____.

Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent. (John 6:28-29)

Two Oppositions to Belief:

- We struggle with _____ too much and _____ too little.

2) Underneath every sin is a _____.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him... They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator. (Romans 1:21, 25)

Martin Luther said, "We do not lie, commit adultery, or steal unless we first make something else more fundamental to our hope and joy and identity than God. When we lie, for example, our reputation (or money or whatever) is at that moment more foundational to our sense of self and happiness than the love of Christ. If we cheat on our income tax form, then money and possessions— and the status or comfort from having more of them-- have become more important to our heart's

sense of significance and security than our identity in Christ. Idolatry, then, is also the root of our other sins and problems.

Repentance is most effective when we can repent of the _____.

Let us examine and probe our ways, and let us return to the LORD. Lamentations 3:40

3) What is an idol?

An idol is anything outside of God that we depend on to give our lives _____

We tend to gravitate toward idols when we fail to draw _____ from God.

4) To identify and idol, ask yourself:

- What do I _____?

For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. Galatians 2:12

- What do I _____?

³⁰ *If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Matthew 6:30*

- What do I _____?

²¹ *Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." ²² But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. Mark 10:21-22*

5) The solution is to apply _____ to our heart's idols.

According to Dr. Steve Childers, faith "involves learning how to set the affections of our mind and heart on Christ... Faith requires a continual rehearsing and delighting in the many privileges that are now ours in Christ."

- Ask yourself, "How is this need already met in Christ?"

After acknowledging and repenting of an idol, I can exercise my faith in 2 ways:

- **I pause and worship Jesus because he laid aside his right to that idol to be put to death.**

*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! *Philippians 2:5-8**

- **I remind myself that the need behind that idol was meant to be met in my relationship with Jesus.**

*¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! *2 Corinthians 5:17**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

On a scale of 1-5, 1 being not at all, and 5 being very relatable, circle which number describes how well you can relate to the following Common Heart Idols:

1 2 3 4 5 **The idol of approval:** I need others to approve of me

1 2 3 4 5 **The idol of control:** I need to be in charge, and hate things I can't control

1 2 3 4 5 **The idol of reputation:** I need to be perceived a certain way

1 2 3 4 5 **The idol of success:** If I'm not successful, my life doesn't have purpose

1 2 3 4 5 **The idol of security:** I need to know that I'm financially taken care of or set

1 2 3 4 5 **The idol of comfort:** Life only has meaning if I can enjoy certain pleasures

1 2 3 4 5 **The idol of helping:** I need to be helping others and for others to depend on me

1 2 3 4 5 **The idol of family:** I need my children/parents/spouse to be happy with me

1 2 3 4 5 **The idol of image:** I am only content when I look a certain way

1 2 3 4 5 **The idol of power:** I need to have power or influence over others

1 2 3 4 5 **The idol of work:** My life only has meaning when I can be productive

1 2 3 4 5 **The idol of suffering:** Only when I'm in a problem or suffering am I able to deal with guilt

1) Which idols were the most relatable to you? Did any of your answers surprise you?

2) How do those idols manifest themselves in your life? In other words, what surface sins are driven by those idols?

3) How do you see your heart idols failing you?

4) What promises in the Gospel can help you to be free of these idols?

5) How do heart idols undermine our ability to love?

PERSONAL ACTIVITY

1. Spend some time alone identifying your common surface sins.
2. Prayerfully consider what heart idols might be behind them.
3. Worship Jesus for his victory over that idol.
4. Find specific gospel promises you can rely on to help defeat the power of that idol.



Close In Prayer



The Gospel Centered Life Mid-Week Lessons

LESSON SEVEN: MISSION

Open in Prayer & Discuss:

- Can you name one or two things that you've learned so far in the Spiritual Growth Campaign that has really impacted your life?
- At this point in your life are you ready for God to send you on a Mission for Him?

BIG IDEA

The Gospel is simultaneously at work within and through us. It's changing our inward desires and motives to bring them inline with God's will. As we experience Christ's love we are compelled to engage those around us with the same kind of redemptive love. God's grace bring renewal everywhere in and through us.

The Lesson

1) Beware of taking all you've learned and making it a _____ alone.

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:13-14 (ESV)

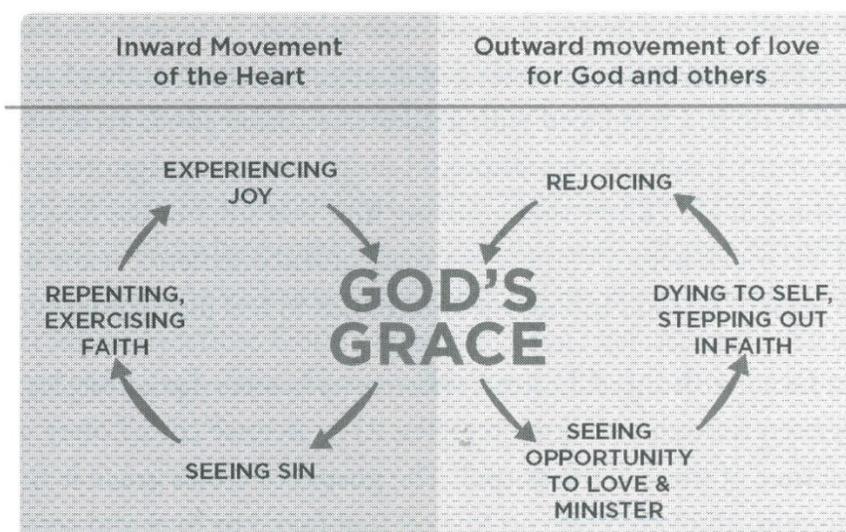
2) God's Gospel is always propelling us _____

³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. Matthew 9:35 (ESV)

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." Luke 24:45-49 (ESV)

- Love is always about helping _____.

⁷ But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also. ⁸ I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. 2 Corinthians 8:7-9 (ESV)



3) The truth test of faith isn't what I feel but what _____.

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. James 1:22-25 (ESV)

APPLICATION EXERCISE: GETTING TO THE HEART OF MISSION

1) Identify a missional opportunity in your life in which you are not motivated to do what you “should” do.

Here are some categories to jump-start your thinking: showing hospitality, actively praying for and engaging co-workers; sharing the gospel with a family member; serving someone who's poor; giving generously, leading spiritually; explaining the biblical worldview to someone who doesn't understand it. Etc.

2) What heart issues hinder you from rightly motivated action in this situation? As you pray and reflect on the root of your inactivity, what do you discern? Be as specific as you can about the things that keep you from expressing gospel-centered love towards others.

3) Repentance: What sin do you see in yourself that you need to repent of?

4) Faith: What specific gospel promises or truths are you not really believing?



Close In Prayer



**The Gospel
Centered Life**

Daily Devotional
Week One



Week One: The Gospel Isn't Everything

Monday: Can You Quickly Explain the Gospel?

¹ *Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 1 Corinthians 15:1 (NIV)*

How well do you know the Gospel that saves you? Can you name its component parts? This week is going to be all about reminding us of what the Gospel is and why that's important.

Could you explain the essence of it quickly and simply in a minute or two? I dare you to try, then grade yourself below and tune in tomorrow as we break it all down clearly and simply.

How'd you do? Great ____ Good ____ Fair ____ Poor ____ Failed ____



Week One: The Gospel Isn't Everything

Tuesday: Jesus Sacrificed Himself on the Cross for our sins

³ *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 15:3 (NIV)*

Jesus death on the cross is the preeminent fact of the major components of the Gospel. It's critical to notice that He did this *voluntarily*, no one made Him (John 10:15). He deliberately, willing and even joyfully shed his blood on the cross so that mankind could be forgiven and brought back to God.

Feeling guilty today? How does your guilt stack up against the Son of God's sacrifice on your behalf? Jesus said, "it is finished" and it is. Meditate on that.



Week One: The Gospel Isn't Everything

Wednesday: Proof of Death

⁴ *that he was buried... 1 Corinthians 15:4a (NIV)*

Jesus had to both shed his blood and die on the cross for us to be forgiven. So how do we know he really died? Simple – he was buried. That's why you see Paul mention his burial in this list of the most important facts of the Gospel. Despite what you see in horror movies, you don't bury the living. The fact that they buried Jesus is the best possible of proofs that he was really dead. Yes, in ancient times they knew the difference between dead guys and ones in a coma!

Jesus actually died, His sacrifice was real, and He spared Himself nothing, "even death on a

cross.” (Phil. 2:8) How does the fact that He willingly endured the horror of such a death for you make you feel?



Week One: The Gospel Isn't Everything

Thursday: He Rose from the Grave - History

⁴ *...that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,* 1 Corinthians 15:4b (NIV)

Today we're going to consider the historical implications of the resurrection of Jesus. Paul clearly states that he did come back to life as do the four Gospels, the book of Acts and every book in the New Testament. They speak of this as a fact, not some kind of spiritual vision. Just as Jesus' death is a fact so is his resurrection.

This is what all Christians build their faith and life upon – that fact that we have a living Savior and Lord! Do you believe this? If so how much?



Week One: The Gospel Isn't Everything

Friday: He Rose from the Grave - Spiritually

⁴ *...that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,*
1 Corinthians 15:4b (NIV)

Notice how Paul says “according to the Scriptures?” This is not only history it's also spiritual for it is in His resurrection that Jesus become Lord of Life, destroys the power of death and hades, and now not only lives forever more but offers us eternal life as well.

His resurrection is not just a historical turning point but a spiritual one as well. Everything changed for us when Jesus rose from the dead, for now we can be accepted, loved and saved through the grace that Jesus paid such a horrible price for.

Rejoice in this salvation!



Week One: The Gospel Isn't Everything

Saturday: Life's biggest question – how to do respond to this?

¹¹ *I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up.* ¹² *I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.* Galatians 1:11-12 (NIV)

As marvelous as the Gospel is it is meaningless to me or you unless we believe it. To believe means I accept it down to the very core of my being. This belief is a life long process of God stamping the Gospel truth deeper and deeper into my soul.

True belief also means I must begin to act in accordance to what I believe. For if I do not, then I do not really believe it.

What can you do differently today or tomorrow because of the Gospel of Jesus?



**The Gospel
Centered Life**

Daily Devotional

Week Two



Week Two: The Four Chapters of the Gospel

Monday: Where to Begin?

¹⁷ *For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel...* 1 Corinthians 1:17 (ESV)

Last week we looked at what the Gospel is, this week we want to look at how to both *think* about it and *communicate* it as well. One simple way to do this is to realize that there are four chapters in the Gospel story. Each one can be summed up with just one word, However, each one is also deep enough for you to spend a lifetime studying.

Today can you guess what those four chapters are or what the four words might be? You should be able to get at least a couple right? Four chapters to change a life for eternity. I'll share the first one with you tomorrow.



Week Two: The Four Chapters of the Gospel

Tuesday: Where Did We Come From?

²⁶ *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image..."* Genesis 1:26 (ESV)

Answer: God. Everything in the universe comes from God. There is only one and He is infinite in both power and love. He is a personal and loving being who speaks to us in His Word the Bible. Neither the world nor anyone in it is an accident. All have been created by God, for God and to fulfill His good purpose.

We come from and are going to God. People everywhere are called to love and serve Him first and others second. He is relational and wants you to come to know Him.

That's a pretty amazing start isn't it? And good news – there is a God, He care for me, and wants me to know Him! Amazing – more tomorrow!



Week Two: The Four Chapters of the Gospel

Wednesday: Why Did Things Go So Wrong?

¹² *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin...* Romans 5:12 (ESV)

Answer: sin. God made us to serve Him & love others but we chose to serve & love ourselves. So the whole world was plunged into sin because of that choice. Sin has two gigantic consequences.

One is spiritual bondage (Rom. 6:15-18) and the other is condemnation (Rom. 6:23).

Addictions, guilt, unforgiveness, revenge, etc. all stem from these two things. Sin has wrecked the world, and each of us as well. This is the bad news part of the Good News. We desperately need someone to do for us what we cannot do. And guess how God provided for that? I'll tell you tomorrow!



Week Two: The Four Chapters of the Gospel

Thursday: What can put things right?

¹ *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Romans 5:1 (ESV)

Answer: Jesus. He did this in 3 ways. First His *incarnation*. God became a human being so that we'll know he understands us because he was one of us! Secondly through *substitution*. Jesus took my place (and yours) on the cross and paid the price I should have paid for my sin. Lastly through *restoration*. Jesus will eventually restore all things to the way God originally wanted them to be, and that includes you and me!

Rejoice in the great salvation Jesus brings us through his live, death, and resurrection!



Week Two: The Four Chapters of the Gospel

Friday: How Can I be put right?

⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* Ephesians 2:8 (ESV)

We are put right with God, ourselves and others by putting our faith in the finished work of Christ. We aren't just forgiven and then asked to try harder. No, faith in Christ means that I trust Him to do in me what I cannot do. I don't just recognize my helplessness, I rejoice in it! For now I can rely on God's Spirit to do in and through me what I cannot do.

Trusting Jesus means really trusting Him for *everything!* And then stepping out in faith knowing He will accomplish His will through me.



Week Two: The Four Chapters of the Gospel

Saturday: Putting it All Together.

¹⁵ *And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.*
Mark 16:15 (ESV)

We've spent the week just barely scratching the surface of the richness of the Gospel. But we've seen enough to know that this is the story God commands us to *share with others*. However, don't forget it's also the story He commands us to *live out* as well.

We cannot do one or the other. We must do both. Otherwise we are not living by faith and in full obedience to our Lord Jesus. The two sides to the four chapters of the Gospel story are to live it out as fully as possible while sharing it with as many as possible.

And yes, all that *is* possible, through the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.



**The Gospel
Centered Life**

Daily Devotional

Week Three



Week Three: The Depth of the Gospel

Monday: Simple not shallow

² *By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.* 1 Corinthians 15:2 (NIV)

The Gospel is simple. The basic message is that we all owe God a debt, because of our sins, that we can never pay. God graciously sent His Son to earth to live, teach and then die in our place, and pay that price. Because of this, all who believe in Him receive eternal life and fellowship with God.

Simple, yes. Shallow no. There's no "Say a prayer and never have a care," attitude we often see today. In fact the New Testament never tells us to "pray to receive Christ" at all. It says to believe it and obey it.

If you've already believed, then God is calling you to obey today.



Week Three: The Depth of the Gospel

Tuesday: Clear not muddy

⁹ *As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!* Galatians 1:9 (NIV)

Not only is the Gospel simple, it's clear. Like the deep water I've seen in the Pacific the depths of the Gospel are awe inspiring but clear at the same time. You see this in Jesus' teaching. He uses simple clear language, yet his teachings are so deep you can spend a lifetime studying them.

People like to complicate things and call that deep. You can see this in religion all over the world, including parts of Christianity. But God loves keeping things simply, pure, yet deeper than anything the human mind can comprehend.

Go deep in the Gospel of God, but don't complicate it with extraneous issues.



Week Three: The Depth of the Gospel

Wednesday: Touching the deepest needs of our hearts

⁸ *So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.* 1 Thessalonians 2:8 (ESV)

What do you think is the deepest need of your heart right now? Can you identify it? Think deeply about it for a moment and see what you come up with. Whatever it is the Gospel speaks directly to it. For in the Gospel we see God's, truth, judgement, power, love, grace, forgiveness & eternal plan, to name just a few.

So when I struggle with my problems I must return to the Gospel. My problems stem from a departure from the truth, and the Gospel is truth. As Paul says, it touches my very soul, and empowers me to pass along my heart & soul with the Gospel as well.

Today, let God's Gospel touch your deepest needs.



Week Three: The Depth of the Gospel

**The Gospel
Centered Life**

Thursday: Showing us universal realities

¹³ *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1:13 (ESV)*

When you believe in and begin to obey the Gospel you see your life begin to improve almost immediately. Why? Because your life begins to fall into line with the way God created the universe to work. When you live in harmony with universe truths, everything goes better.

God created a universe where you reap what you sow. If you understand that and respond by carefully sowing goodness around you, you'll benefit. All this starts in the Gospel where we see God rescuing us from our own folly. Our Father is real, His character is revealed in the Gospel and in the universe around us.

Let us live in light of His truth.



Week Three: The Depth of the Gospel

**The Gospel
Centered Life**

Friday: Bringing me to the end of myself

¹⁶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16 (ESV)*

The most important thing that the Gospel does for us is to bring us to end of ourselves. That's where it all begins. You have to forsake your own ability to save yourself, admit you are helpless and then cling to your Savior who is revealed in the Gospel.

The Gospel brings us into a God centered (or Gospel Centered) view of life and seeks to free us from the natural, self-centered, view of life we have. We are not the answer to any of our prob-

lems – Christ and His Gospel are the answer we need.

By forsaking self and clinging to God I find the salvation & power I need to live.



Week Three: The Depth of the Gospel

Saturday: How deep is my understanding and faith in the Gospel?

¹⁴ *Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,* ¹⁵ *and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”* Mark 1:14-15 (ESV)

Now that you've spent a week looking at and thinking about the depth of the Gospel, it's time for some application. Just how deep is my knowledge of the Gospel? Does my life reflect this? Am I living in gratitude for all the God has done for me?



**The Gospel
Centered Life**

Daily Devotional

Week Four



Week Four: The Gospel Fulfills All Scripture

Monday: The Gospel & Creation

¹⁶ *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.* Colossians 1:16 (ESV)

Jesus, as part of the Holy Trinity, was there at creation. He made all things and knew all things and as He created He poured grace and love into everything that was made. Just look at our universe, which is a defective version of the original due to the fall. Yet even so we see love and beauty and grace all around us.

The Good News of the Gospel is clear in creation for creation points to the amazing Creator of all this beauty and wonder. Step outside today and take a good long look at what God has done. Then rejoice for His creative work continued in the Gospel with saves us all.

Week Four: The Gospel Fulfills All Scripture

Tuesday: The Gospel & the Fall



¹⁵ *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.* Genesis 3:15 (ESV)

When God created mankind, he did so with the Gospel in mind. Foreknowing that the fall into sin would happen God had planned from the very beginning how to bring us back into His family once again. Far from defeating God's plan, the fall only gave God a chance to show the universe just how powerful and gracious He is by preparing the way for the Gospel.

While not wanting the fall or any sin to besmirch His creatures or creation, the only wise God was more than prepared for it's coming. For the coming of sin began the long process of bringing the Gospel and salvation by grace into the world.

No matter what happens God is prepared and already has a plan to rescue and redeem us.



Week Four: The Gospel Fulfills All Scripture

Wednesday: The Gospel & Judgement

¹⁶ *on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.* Romans 2:16 (ESV)

Believe it or not there is good news in judgement. First of all it's good news that God has standards

that he created for our good and he holds to those standards. Unlike humans, he doesn't play favorites. He sticks to the truth.

The Gospel good news is that this holy God has given us a way to escape judgement through the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. Jesus took my place and your place and paid the price for our sin. So there's no more price to be paid if I'll accept His free gift of salvation. Jesus took the judgement on Himself to set us free.

So the reality of judgement only highlights the reality of grace, forgiveness and freedom in Jesus.



Week Four: The Gospel Fulfills All Scripture

Thursday: The Gospel & the Exile

¹ ...And Judah was taken into exile in Babylon because of their breach of faith. 1 Chronicles 9:1 (ESV)

Israel spent time in exile, first in Egypt and then many years later the famous 70 years in Babylon. Why were they there? They sinned and didn't trust God. God left them there but eventually called them back to freedom in Israel.

So too everyone in the world today is born into exile from God. Our sin forces us away from Him, and only by returning to Him in repentance and faith can we be welcomed back into His family through Jesus who was also exiled without a home (Matt. 8:20) & died to bring us all back home to His Father again.



Week Four: The Gospel Fulfills All Scripture

Friday: The Gospel & the Restoration

³¹ *who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.* Luke 9:31 (ESV)

On the Mount of Transfiguration they spoke of Jesus "departure" or death. The Greek word there means exodus. Yes Jesus death, burial and resurrection (the Gospel) is the ultimate picture of God redeeming His children and bringing them home again.

The Gospel shows us this beautiful truth. We can and will be restored to God and what God wants us to be – but only through the exodus of Jesus. We follow Him out of sin and eventually out of this world into our Father's Kingdom. That's true freedom!



Week Four: The Gospel Fulfills All Scripture

Saturday: The Gospel & Me?

³⁵ *For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.* Mark 8:35 (ESV)

We've spent this entire week looking at how the Gospel reflects the entire story of the Bible. Everything in the Old Testament is there to teach us and show us what the Gospel really means. It's amazing when you study it and then stop to think about it.

But all that wealth of history and sacrifice lacks any meaning to me at all if all I do is look at it. I must do more than that. I must sacrifice my own life to Christ and His Gospel. Then and only will it's richness and power enter me, forgive me, transform me and set me free to be God's child in Christ Jesus.

So, where are you at with this Gospel?



**The Gospel
Centered Life**

Daily Devotional

Week Five



Week Five: The Gospel Changes Everything

Monday: The Gospel & Depression

¹⁴ *He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:14 (NIV)*

If there's something we hear about quite often it's depression. Moralists will tell the depressed to change their behavior and relativists will focus on their emotions, hoping to make them feel better. But the Gospel leads us straight into our hearts.

If I'm depressed and not from a physiological reason, then the answer lies in my heart. Somewhere, somehow I've removed Jesus from being Lord, and need to tear down that idol and once again let Jesus be Lord of my life.

The Gospel always goes to the heart.



Week Five: The Gospel Changes Everything

Tuesday: The Gospel & loving relationships

sians 1:5 (NIV)

⁵ *the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel Colos-*

In the Gospel we see Jesus boldly confront people about their sins and then ultimately sacrifice himself to save those people whether they will believe in Him or not. Amazing love. This is the kind of honest, brave and self-sacrificing love that that Gospel put into our hearts.

This is the kind of love that creates good relationships because it drives us to be honest, true and committed at the same time. Our relationships aren't built on being benefited by another, rather they are built upon God's love for that person that flows from our hearts.



Week Five: The Gospel Changes Everything

Wednesday: The Gospel & Sexuality

³ *The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 1 Corinthians 7:3 (NIV)*

In the Gospel we see sex as neither dirty or simply a biological impulse. It's a creation of God, and therefore good, but rises above the mere physical. God loves sex so much he restricted it to marriage. Within that sacred relationship sex represents two things:

The self-sacrificial way Christ gave himself to us, and the kind of close relationship He wants to

have with us. Selfish sex is sin because sexuality is meant to reflect the love, giving nature of God and how much he wants to give His children pleasure.



Week Five: The Gospel Changes Everything

Thursday: The Gospel & Family

¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 1 Peter 4:17 (NIV)

The Gospel is what brings us back into the family of God. It shows us that God is our ultimate father, and that our earthly families should mirror what God's family will be like in heaven. One is a picture of the other.

Therefore we should neither be too dependent on our parents, nor too angry towards them. They are gifts of God, even if that gift was distorted by their sin. And if our parents abandon or abuse us, we can always look to our Heavenly Father and His heavenly family.



Week Five: The Gospel Changes Everything

Friday: The Gospel & Race & Culture

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23 (ESV)

The Gospel destroys all divisions between tribes, races and countries. It does this simply because it is the great leveler. Regardless of your background or inheritance you are still part of the "all" who have sinned against God and are in desperate need of a Savior.

So the idea of tribal, racial or some other kind of group superiority is contrary to the Gospel. We are all sinners, we are all incapable of paying for that sin or saving ourselves. We are all brought back to God by the same Jesus, washed in the same blood and live for the same Lord.

So whatever cultural differences we may have and no matter how different we may look from one another – we are one in the Gospel.



Week Five: The Gospel Changes Everything

Saturday: The Gospel & Witness

¹⁵ *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)*

We are compelled to share the Gospel with those around us because of love and generosity, not guilt – *if* we understand the Gospel. The Gospel doesn't make us pushy and doesn't lead us to try and nag, argue or guilt people into the Kingdom.

Instead we share the Gospel with others because God loves them and we love them and we want the best for them. What could be better than establishing your faith in Christ, receiving eternal life and then growing in Him?

Once again the Gospel comes from the heart.



**The Gospel
Centered Life**

Daily Devotional

Week Six



Week Six: The Gospel Centered Life

Monday: The Gospel & Self-Control

¹¹ *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,*
¹² *training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives...* Titus 2:11-12 (ESV)

Self-control is a big issue for most people. Usually we are either told to suck it up & do right (will based) or to experiment & then do what feels right. However the Gospel reject both approaches. Instead it points us to God's Word and Will and builds with us new desires.

The Gospel of Jesus starts with God's truth coming into our hearts and beginning the slow process of changing us from the inside out. This is where real, Godly, self-control comes from, right out of our Spirit filled hearts.



Week Six: The Gospel Centered Life

Tuesday: The Gospel & Guilt & Self-Image

⁴⁵ *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" Mark 10:45 (ESV)

Low self-esteem usually comes from a sense of guilt. We have failed to live up to some set of standards that we think we should, and thus comes guilt, shame and self-condemnation. So I either the guilt or reject the standards and seek to live on emotion alone.

The Gospel however embraces God's standards and gives us assurance and peace because Jesus has ransomed us from guilt by already paying the price for our sin. So in the Gospel we are completely bold – Jesus has done it – and completely humble – because we can't do anything apart from Him.



Week Six: The Gospel Centered Life

Wednesday: The Gospel & Human Authority

²¹ *"Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."* Matthew 22:21 (NIV)

In the Gospel we find that while God's authority is absolute, there are other authorities under Him. So we give to both what is proper and appropriate. Thus Christians are told to obey the authorities and to be good citizens of whatever country they find themselves in.

However, that only goes so far. When any government seeks to usurp the place of God, then we must make a stand. ²⁹ *But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.*

Acts 5:29 (ESV)

Only in the Gospel do we find such a clear and balanced view of authority.



Week Six: The Gospel Centered Life

Thursday: The Gospel & Joy & Humor

⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.* Philippians 4:4 (ESV)

Moralists tend to take themselves very seriously while relativists tend to become cynical. But the Gospel helps us to avoid both of these extremes. Instead we are filled with joy because we are saved by grace! Such an amazing miracle touches our souls and fills our heart with eternal joy.

So we don't take ourselves very seriously at all. We take our Lord and His Word and His will for our lives seriously, but not ourselves. Thus we can laugh at ourselves freely for grace has set us free, and we are free to laugh.



Week Six: The Gospel Centered Life

Friday: The Gospel & Class Divisions

¹⁶ *no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.* Philemon 1:16 (NIV)

Just about everywhere you go there are class differences that divide people. The rich from the poor, the noble from the commoners, etc. Yet the Gospel destroys all such class differences as Paul shows us above. He tells Philemon to welcome back his escaped slave as a *brother in Christ!*

Such an attitude was unheard of in Roman culture. Yet in Christ this is easy because after all we're all sinners who've been saved by the Grace of Jesus. Neither our works nor our background or status contributed anything to our salvation at all. So there's only one class – those who've embraced Jesus as their Lord. Nothing else matters.



Week Six: The Gospel Centered Life

Saturday: The Gospel & Me.

²⁴ *But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. Acts 20:24 (ESV)*

This is the final devotional in **The Gospel Centered Life**. Yes, these have been small, quick devotions to read. But if you look back over them you'll see a lot of topics and issues that each and every one of us need to apply to our lives.

So what will you do? Breathe a sigh of relief, congratulate yourself on finishing this and then just move on? Or you will you go back, find the areas that speak most to your life, and begin to apply the Gospel truth to yourself and the Spirit's work of transforming you into Christlikeness continue.

It's all up to you now.