


SHAPED BY THE { GOSPEL }



DOING BALANCED,
GOSPEL-CENTERED
MINISTRY IN YOUR CITY

A New Edition of
Section One

CENTER
CHURCH

TIMOTHY KELLER

WITH NEW CONTRIBUTIONS BY
MICHAEL HORTON AND DANE ORTLUND

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN

Shaped by the Gospel

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

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SERIES INTRODUCTION

WHAT TO DO

How the gospel is expressed in a particular church in one community at a point in time

- *Local cultural adaptation*
- *Worship style & programming*
- *Discipleship & outreach processes*
- *Church governance & management*



MINISTRY
EXPRESSION

HOW TO SEE

A faithful restatement of the gospel with rich implications for life, ministry, and mission in a type of culture at a moment in history

- *Vision and values*
- *Ministry “DNA”*
- *Emphases, stances*
- *Philosophy of ministry*

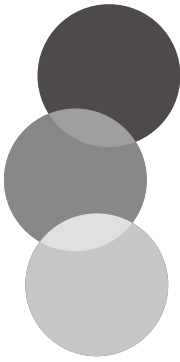
THEOLOGICAL
VISION

WHAT TO BELIEVE

Timeless truths from the Bible about God, our relationship to him, and his purposes in the world

- *Theological tradition*
- *Denominational affiliation*
- *Systematic & biblical theology*

DOCTRINAL
FOUNDATION



Chapter 1

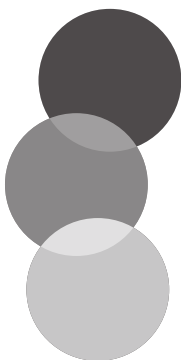
THE GOSPEL IS NOT EVERYTHING

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This chapter looks at several truths that are not the gospel. In what sense are each of these not the gospel?
 - everything the Bible teaches
 - a way of life; something we do
 - joining Christ's kingdom program; a divine rehabilitation plan for the world

If the gospel is not everything, what is the gospel?

2. Keller writes, "The gospel is not about something we do but about what has been done for us, and yet the gospel results in a whole new way of life. This grace and the good deeds that result must be both distinguished and connected." How can an individual or ministry go about distinguishing between "the gospel" and "the results of the gospel"?
3. The section titled "The Gospel Has Chapters" shows how to present the gospel to someone as chapters in a larger story. What other conversational pathways have you found to be fruitful in relating the gospel to non-Christians? To Christians?
4. What happens when the gospel is proclaimed without its results, or when its results are pursued without proclamation?



Chapter 2

THE GOSPEL IS NOT A SIMPLE THING

HOME/EXILE	YAHWEH/ COVENANT	KINGDOM
AT CREATION MADE FOR:		
a place of rest and shalom	a faithful covenant love relationship with God	God's kingdom and kingliness
SIN IS/RESULTS IN:		
self-centeredness, destroying shalom	unfaithfulness, causing God's curse and wrath	idolatry, causing enslavement
ISRAEL IS:		
exiled in Egypt, then Babylon	called to faithfulness but is unfaithful	looking for a true judge/king
JESUS IS:		
the rejected but resurrected Lord, who breaks the power of death	the suffering servant but new covenant Lord, who takes the curse of sin	the returning true king, who frees us from the world, flesh, Devil
RESTORATION:		
the garden-city of God	the marriage supper of the Lamb	true freedom under the reign of God

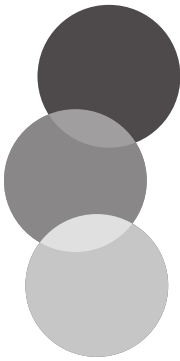
RELATED THEMES (THE EXILE AND OUR HOMECOMING)	
Rest and Sabbath	Sin has left us restless. How can we enter God's rest?
Justice and Shalom	The fabric of the world is broken. How can we restore shalom?
Trinity and Community	We were made for personal and interdependent community with God and his people because we reflect the triune God. How can we become part of this community?

RELATED THEMES (THE COVENANT AND ITS FULFILLMENT)	
Righteousness and Nakedness	We experience shame and guilt. How can our sins be covered?
Marriage and Faithfulness	We long for true love and closure. How can we find it?
Presence and Sanctuary	We are made to flourish in the presence of God. How can we stand in it?

RELATED THEMES (THE KINGDOM AND ITS COMING)	
Image and Likeness	Loving God supremely is the only way to truly love anything else and become your true self, to become truly free (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15).
Idolatry and Freedom	Serving God supremely is the only way to freedom.
Wisdom and the Word	Submission to the Word of God is the way to wisdom.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you or others you know ever felt a pressure to create or adopt a “single, one-size-fits-all gospel presentation that should be used everywhere, that serves as a test of orthodoxy”? What is the appeal of this? What are the risks?
2. Which of the intercanonical themes described in this chapter most resonated with you? Which intercanonical theme would best resonate with non-Christians in your ministry context? With people in your own church? What new ways of communicating the gospel does this open up for you?
3. Read the three passages in Acts cited at the end of the chapter. Jot down a few notes about the differences among Paul’s gospel presentations. What does this exercise tell you about your own audience’s “capacities and beliefs” and how they should shape the way you present and argue for the gospel?



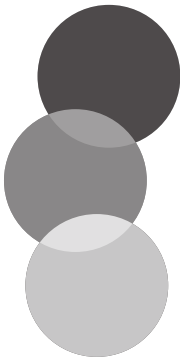
Chapter 3

THE GOSPEL AFFECTS EVERYTHING

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Keller writes, “Here’s a test: if you think one of these errors [legalism or license] is much more dangerous than the other, you are probably partially participating in the one you fear less.” Which error have you tended to fear less, and why?
2. Keller writes, “The primary cause of all of our alienations [is] our separation from God.” How has the gospel mended this primary ailment in you and how has it helped curb the many other symptoms that flow from it? How does this experience prepare you to minister to alienated people?
3. Keller writes, “The gospel addresses our greatest need and brings change and transformation to every area of life.” The gospel also treats the alienations that flow from our alienation from God. Rehearse, in your own words, how the gospel treats at least three of the following areas:
 - discouragement and depression
 - love and relationships
 - sexuality
 - family and parental expectations

- self-control
 - racial and cultural differences
 - our motive for witness
 - obedience to human authority
 - guilt and self-image
 - joy and humor
 - our attitudes toward class
4. Look at the three aspects of the gospel dealt with in this chapter: incarnation/upside-down, atonement/inside-out, and resurrection/forward-back. Compare these to the similar outline in the section titled “The Gospel Has Chapters” in chapter 1. How can you sharpen and clarify the way you set the gospel within the story line of the Bible?

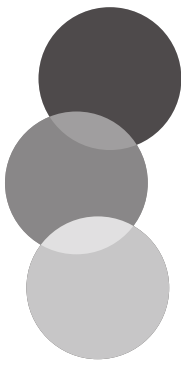


Chapter 4

THE NEED FOR GOSPEL RENEWAL

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever experienced spiritual renewal in a corporate setting as described in this chapter? If so, how would you describe it? How did it differ from a more personal experience of renewal?
2. What training currently takes place in your church for teaching children and new believers, and what three things could you do differently after reading this chapter?
3. What does it mean to say that “the basic insights and practices of gospel renewal ministry are right for two reasons: they fit our times, and they center on the heart in a biblical way.” How does gospel renewal ministry fit our times, and how is it uniquely focused on the heart?
4. How can you bring more of a gospel renewal focus to your existing ministry?



Chapter 5

THE ESSENCE OF GOSPEL RENEWAL

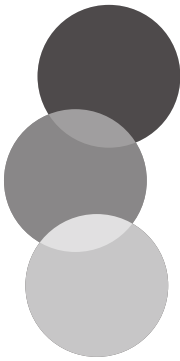
A QUICK COMPARISON OF RELIGION AND THE GOSPEL

RELIGION	GOSPEL
"I obey; therefore I'm accepted."	"I'm accepted; therefore I obey."
Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.	Motivation is based on grateful joy.
I obey God in order to get <i>things</i> from God.	I obey God to get <i>God</i> – to delight and resemble him.
When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or myself, since I believe, like Job's friends, that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.	When circumstances in my life go wrong, I struggle, but I know that all my punishment fell on Jesus and that, while he may allow this for my training, he will exercise his fatherly love within my trial.
When I am criticized, I am furious or devastated because it is essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.	When I am criticized, I struggle, but it is not essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." My identity is not built on my record or my performance but on God's love for me in Christ. I became a Christian by understanding these truths; therefore, in Christ, I can take criticism.
My prayer life consists largely of petition and only heats up when I am in a time of need. My main purpose in prayer is control of the environment.	My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose is fellowship with him.

RELIGION	GOSPEL
<p>My self-view swings between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to people who fail. If and when I am not living up to standards, I feel humble but not confident — I feel like a failure.</p>	<p>My self-view is not based on a view of myself as a moral achiever. In Christ I am <i>simul justus et peccator</i> — simultaneously sinful and lost, yet accepted in Christ. I am so bad he <i>had</i> to die for me, and I am so loved he was <i>glad</i> to die for me. This leads me to deeper and deeper humility as well as deeper confidence, without either sniveling or swaggering.</p>
<p>My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work or how moral I am, so I <i>must</i> look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral. I disdain and feel superior to others.</p>	<p>My identity and self-worth are centered on the One who died for his enemies, who was crucified outside the city for me. I am saved by sheer grace, so I <i>can't</i> look down on those who believe or practice something different from me. Only by grace am I what I am. I have no inner need to win arguments.</p>
<p>Since I look to my own pedigree or performance for my spiritual acceptability, my heart manufactures idols. It may be my talents, moral record, personal discipline, social status, etc. I absolutely <i>have</i> to have them, so they serve as my main hope, meaning, happiness, security, and significance, whatever I may say I believe about God.</p>	<p>I have many good things in my life — family, work, spiritual disciplines, etc., but none of these good things are <i>ultimate</i> things to me. None are things I absolutely <i>have</i> to have, so there is a limit to how much anxiety, bitterness, and despondency they can inflict on me when they are threatened and lost.</p>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you articulate the three ways of responding to God? What are the differences and similarities between the two ways of rejecting God? How do both of these contrast with a response to the gospel?
2. Where do you find yourself in the chart titled “A Quick Comparison of Religion and the Gospel”? Go back and honestly take stock: Do the majority of your descriptors fall to the left column or to the right? In what situations do you find yourself turning to religion instead of the gospel? How have your patterns changed over the last five years, and why?
3. Keller writes, “The only way into a ministry that sees people’s lives change, that brings joy and power and electricity without authoritarianism, is through preaching the gospel to deconstruct both legalism and relativism.” Why is it necessary to confront and deconstruct both of these errors? Which is more prevalent in your context? Which are you more likely to confront, and what can you do to restore balance to your ministry?
4. The apostle Paul uses pictures of the gospel rather than pressure to lead people to change. This chapter gives three examples (generosity, husbands honoring wives, and self-control). Choose another area of life change and take notes on how you would bring the gospel to bear on the motivation of someone in your congregation. If you are in a group setting, practice this with someone else.



Chapter 6

THE WORK OF GOSPEL RENEWAL

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Keller writes, “Maintenance prayer meetings are short, mechanical, and focused on physical needs inside the church. In contrast, the three basic traits of frontline prayer are these: a request for grace to confess sins and to humble ourselves; a compassion and zeal for the flourishing of the church and the reaching of the lost; and a yearning to know God, to see his face, to glimpse his glory.” How have you experienced God working through “frontline” prayer? If you do not currently have these prayer times in your church, how can you go about beginning them?
2. One way to engage in gospel application is by training lay leaders to minister the gospel to others. This involves personal meetings and counseling to help people learn how to repent of their idols and self-righteousness. Does this type of gospel application currently happen in your church? If not, how can you begin training people to apply the gospel? How is ministering the gospel different from other forms of counseling?

3. Gospel innovation involves creatively communicating the gospel in new ways. How have you seen an overreliance on a particular communication style or methodology hinder a ministry? Why is it necessary to be innovative? What are some dangers associated with this?
4. The section titled “Preaching for Gospel Renewal” gives five characteristics that define preaching that leads to renewal. Which of these five do you need to strengthen? How can you incorporate these missing emphases into your preaching?