

# The Gospel-Centered Life

Rob Rogers      April 24, 2022

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## **Introduction**

Beginning **today**, everything that we are going to talk about through the summer aligns with what we talked about in our Vision Sunday. Everything fits under the banner of our becoming a Disciple-making Church.

One of the major problems with American Christianity is that often the church is more concerned with the *quantity of attenders* than the *quality of the disciples*. We have an epidemic in our country of people that have attended church, maybe even for decades who are still spiritually immature.

### **Hebrews 5:12-14**

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, <sup>13</sup> for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

- The author is saying that there should be a correlation between the amount of time a person has known Jesus and their spiritual maturity. *Why doesn't it always work that way?*

### **What is a disciple?**

#### **Matthew 4:19**

**“Follow Me, - and I will make you - fishers of men.”**

#### **DISCIPLE:**

Someone that is **following Jesus**, being **changed by Jesus**, and **on the mission of Jesus**.

You can claim to be a Christian, you can go to church your whole life!

*But if you are not actively following Jesus, being changed by Jesus and on the mission of Jesus, you will remain spiritually immature.*

- you can have all the knowledge about Him
- you can memorize your Bible
- you can recite in Greek
- but if you're not obeying the commands of Jesus
- *you'll remain spiritually immature...*

Over the next five months, we're to cover each of the following categories in three different sermon series

**THE GOSPEL-CENTERED LIFE** (*Following Jesus*)  
**THE TRANSFORMED LIFE** (*Changed by Jesus*)  
**LIFE ON MISSION** (*On the mission of Jesus*)

We're going to continue to release the discussion videos where a rotation of our pastors will talk in greater detail about the message as a resource for our Life Groups.

**Today**, we're kicking off the Gospel-Centered Life sermon series. What I want you to see over the next six weeks is the **centrality of the gospel in every area of your life** as a follower of Jesus.

When we say Gospel-Centered, what we're saying is — that your whole life, every aspect of it, your actions, your life decisions, your family, your marriage, your parenting, your wealth, your resources, and relationships — your thoughts, your motives, your ability to work, and your ability to truly rest — is all informed, and completely shaped by your understanding of the gospel.

Here's where we're going today for our intro to this series...

**What the gospel is**  
**What the gospel does**  
**How the gospel works**

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## What the gospel is

It is so important that we understand the depth, the power, the beauty, the freedom, and the joy of the gospel if we're going to genuinely be disciples that look like Jesus, and who make disciples that look like Jesus.

One way to really understand the gospel is this:

**The gospel is not advice — it's news.**

**Advice is something you get so you can improve your life in the future.**

**News is the announcement of something that has already taken place that inevitably changes your future.**

**The GOSPEL is not advice. It's NEWS.**

Every other religion offers you advice on how to achieve nirvana, become one with the universe, or how to live in such a way that when you die, you'll get your own planet.

But Christianity brings you NEWS. It's not advice on how to achieve your best life.. or how to gain more influence... or what you must do! ***It's the news of what God has already done!***

All the other religions and world systems for that matter, not just religion, tell you how you have to earn your way up... you have to be good enough, moral enough. ***But only the gospel brings you news that God doesn't demand that you earn your way up, instead He came down. It's not about your clearing the path to God, but God clearing the path to you.***

**1 Corinthians 2:2**

**For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.**

- What Jesus has accomplished for us... that's the gospel.

**Advice puts burdens on you.  
The gospel takes the burdens off.**

1. **Legalism** – Unless you do this and this and this, and jump through these hoops, and behave like us or act like us, then you must not be a Christian. That's legalism. It's a different form of legalism, but it's still legalism. They're putting burdens on you. **This is NOT the gospel. It's a heavy yoke.**

*And there's a different type of legalism...*

2. **Liberalism** – We don't talk about wrath, or sin, or righteousness and unrighteousness, or homosexuality, or judgement, or hell. We see the church more as a new kind of community that is socially active. We're going to renew our world through activism... and if you're into that, and behave like that, you can be a Christian in our community too... not bigoted, you've got to be inclusive.
  - a. That is not the gospel either. Why? Because it's picking and choosing the scriptures based on your personal preferences — AND because it's loading on a different type of burden.

But under the gospel... all burdens, all guilt, all fear, all shame, all feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, are taken *off* under the gospel.

***The gospel levels the playing field of humanity —  
it rids us of self-condemnation and self-exaltation at the same time!***

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## **What the gospel does**

**Example:** One of the things that often unfortunately is in the workplace you always have bosses, supervisors, managers taking credit for the ideas, the creativity, the efforts, the work of their direct reports.

There's an example of a woman worked at a TV network in NY. Dream job... and she made a career ending mistake. Her boss, who had a lot of credibility and relational capital, rather than blaming her, or making it clear that she was at fault, went in to meet with his superiors, and said, *"If you're going to blame anyone for this mistake, blame me, she's new and I didn't do a good job training her, showing her the ropes, it's on me. Don't hold this against her, I'm the one ultimately responsible."*

She goes to her boss in absolute amazement and demands to know why he did that! She says... all my other bosses took credit for my successes, but you took the blame for my failure! Why? And after she continued to press him he finally gave in and said, okay, I'm going to tell you why, but just remember you wouldn't let it go and you made me tell you, *"I'm a Christian. And my whole life is based on someone who took the blame for me. That shapes the way I do everything in my life."*

**Let me ask you** – does being religious, or following the rules, or living by the law give you the ability to live like this? You do have the golden rule as a part of the law — but a rule or a law doesn't give you the *power* to live like this... to sacrifice your own reputation, or relational capital for someone else's mistake.

**The law doesn't give you power. Rules don't give you power. The law gives *requirement* — not *power*.**

In Galatians 2 when Paul confronts Peter when he stopped eating with the Gentiles because of the Jews that were present — Paul doesn't say, "Peter, stop acting like a racist!" Look at what he says...

### **Galatians 2:14**

But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the **gospel**, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

He doesn't say, "You're not following the *rules*, Peter!" He says, "*You've forgotten the gospel!*" Does the Law of God require that you not be a racist? Absolutely... but what's going on with racism is there is something in the human heart that is so insecure, so fragile, and so in need of feeling superior, that it has to exalt itself over someone else for one reason or another in order to be okay.

What we see in Paul's exhortation of Peter in Galatians 2 is that ***racism is not a rule problem, it's a gospel problem. It's a heart issue.***

If you're a manager in your workplace, your taking credit for your people's ideas or hard work is not a rule problem, you know you shouldn't do that. But there's something in the human heart that is so fragile and so insecure, that we step on and over others to get ahead, to get the affirmation we're so desperate for. But the gospel frees you from the need to elevate yourself at other's expense, and instead empowers you to elevate others at your own expense. That's what the supervisor did with his direct report at the TV network — he lowered himself, in order to protect and elevate her, even though according to the world's standards, he had every reason not to.

*The gospel-centered life frees you and empowers you to love people like Jesus, because of everything Christ has done. The gospel reorients your whole entire life with the motivation, and power to live radically different than the rest of the secular world, or even the rest of religious Christians out there that look nothing like Christ.*

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## **How the gospel works**

One of the ways you can tell that someone doesn't understand the gospel — they're very judgmental and condemning of anybody who isn't as outraged about things as they are — and you'll notice the things they're angry about are always changing.

Someone once said the way you can tell if someone is a pharisee is they go around all the time telling people, "That's not funny." A sure sign that someone doesn't understand the beauty of the gospel is they have no sense of humor.

But the gospel gives you the ability to laugh at yourself! To not take yourself too seriously — which is the only kind of humor that is actually funny and healing! It's not degrading yourself, or thinking lowly of yourself, it's not self-loathing — it's being secure in who God says you are and being able find freedom and joy in Him. The gospel gives you the ability to not think too highly or too lowly about yourself... it just gives you the ability to not be self-conscious.

*Personal: One of the things I've shared with you before is what I talk to God about before every time I step on stage... before I preach or speak...*

*“Thank you God, whether this goes really well, or really poorly, thank you that I’m completely loved and accepted by you.” And as soon as I’m done, I’ll say, “God, thank you, whether that went really well or really poorly, that I’m completely loved and accepted by you!”*

You know what I’m doing? I’m beating the gospel into my own head and heart. I’m centering my life on the gospel. That shapes my life... my attitudes, my motivations, my desires.

*But for the gospel to change you, to influence your motivations, you have to think through how to apply it and appropriate it to your life.*

Maybe for you, centering your life on the gospel looks like this...

*“God, today, I recognize that whether I get that promotion or not, you’ve given me an opportunity to serve. To make a difference in someone else’s life. To elevate someone else at my own expense because that’s what you did for me. Whether I’m rewarded on this side of heaven or not, help me live this way, because this is exactly what you did for me.”*

*“God, help me be present with my children today... give me an undistracted heart for them, because you made me the very focus of your love and your life, help me give to my children an undivided love that you first gave to me. You saw me, help me see them. You pursued me. Help me pursue them with that same kind of sacrificial love and intentionality.”*

*“God, help me recognize that I’m totally and completely secure in you, and therefore gain the ability to not take myself so seriously. Help me laugh at myself and enjoy the life that you’ve given me... because you came to give me abundant life. You laid it all down, not so that I would walk under the yoke of guilt, or shame, or self-condemnation, but that I would be free, and live in your joy.”*

In each example, you’re preaching the gospel to yourself. You’re centering yourself on God’s goodness and grace over your life. If you’ll practice when you find your heart wandering and gravitating toward religiosity, or relativism... you’ll begin to see your change before your very eyes... people will begin to wonder what in the world is happening with you.

*“This truth of the Gospel is the principal article of all Christian doctrine...  
Most necessary is it that we know this article well, teach it to others,  
and beat it into their heads continually.”<sup>1</sup>  
-Martin Luther*

*What Luther is saying is that we’re forgetful.*

One of the purposes of preaching is simply to remind us of the things we’ve forgotten. So, in this series, we’re going to be looking into how the gospel works its way out in your:

1. Work
2. Family – Marriage & Parenting
3. Relationships & Singleness
4. Wealth

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther. *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (Smith, English, 1860)

**The gospel is not the way you enter the Christian faith  
It is the entirety of the Christian faith  
It is the core, the heartbeat, the motive, the power  
The beginning the end, and everything in between**

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## **Discussion Questions**

1. What is our working definition of a disciple? Repeat it together.
2. What does it mean that the gospel is not *advice* — it's *news*?
3. How does advice put burdens on you while the gospel takes burdens off?
4. How is liberalism a type of legalism?
5. How might centering your life on the gospel change the way you live?

## **NOTES**