

CHAPTER I: A PEOPLE FORMED

SUMMARY

A big gap exists between understanding the gospel and understanding what the gospel means for the church. Perhaps this is largely because we tend to think of the gospel as an *individual* message that causes *individual* transformation—which is partially true. But the gospel is much more than that. The gospel also forms the church. Scripture says Jesus “gave himself up for the church” (Eph. 5:25), buying the church “with His own blood” (Acts 20:28), in order to “redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). The gospel needs to be seen in this total perspective.

AUDIT

The gospel creates not just *people* individually, but a *people*, collectively. The gospel isn't just individual and cosmic; it is also deeply corporate. With their individual gifts, resources and levels of faith, early believers built one another up into maturity. They encouraged one another, blessed one another, rebuked one another, disciplined one another, outdid one another in showing honor, taught one another and trained one another in the gospel. Repeatedly in Acts, the growth of the church is attributed to the fact that “the word of God spread” and “prevailed” (Acts 6:7; 13:49; 19:20).

1. **On a scale of 1 (not very well at all) to 10 (extremely well), how is your church moving people out of an individualistic concept of church and into a more corporate understanding? Explain.**
2. **How well are you empowering the people you've been called to lead to do the work of ministry?**
3. **How well do the people in your church understand their biblical responsibility to one another? Do they honor, encourage, rebuke and edify each other?**

- 4. Are you more likely to hire new staff positions from the men and women who have been raised up, trained and equipped at your church or are you forced to go outside to find qualified help?**

The church succeeds, maturing by the power of God's Spirit working in and through the Word as He massages it deeply into the life of His body. A church is alive and full when she is sustained by the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and is drawn back to that precious reality again and again, every time she gathers.

- 5. How does the church leadership gauge "success" in ministry? How would your staff say that success is measured? Is success defined according to the Person and Work of Christ?**
- 6. On a scale of 1 (not very well at all) to 10 (extremely well), how "alive and full" would you say your church is right now? Explain.**
- 7. In what ways do you see "God's Spirit working in and through the Word"? Give concrete examples.**
- 8. Do you draw your people back to the life, death and resurrection of Christ *every time* you gather?**
- 9. How are you keeping the life, death and resurrection of Christ the central component of all you're doing in the life of the church?**

How does the gospel not only save but also sanctify? The pattern we see in Scripture is an *indicative/imperative* pattern. Notice that whenever a command is given in the Scriptures (an imperative)—in either the Old or New Testament—it is always attached to a “why” (an indicative) for obeying that command. This pattern becomes incredibly important for the church, always to be viewed through the lens of the gospel. If we don’t see this pattern, we are at risk of buying into a false gospel that seems adequate to save us but then sends us back to the law to be sanctified or made holy.

10. How fully do you grasp and understand the sanctifying work of the gospel? Explain how the gospel sanctifies.

11. Are you growing weary of trying to be all that the Scriptures command you to be or are you able to rest in the finished work of Christ? Explain.

12. Is there evidence among the people you lead that they misunderstand the sanctifying work of the gospel? How so?

The more the church is tapped into the gospel, then the more transformative power will be present by the Holy Spirit in the church. But the more a church gets away from the centrality of the gospel, the more a church will run on fumes, seeing people conformed to a pattern of religion rather than transformed by the Spirit of God.

13. On a scale of 1 (running on fumes) to 10 (full of transformative power), how would you describe your current relationship with Christ? Explain.

14. On a scale of 1 (running on fumes) to 10 (full of transformative power), how would you describe the ministry you are leading? Explain.

15. On a scale of 1 (conformed to religious practice) to 10 (lives transformed with a visible love for Jesus), how would you describe the fruit of the ministry you are leading? Explain.

RENEWAL

1. Take time to read the book of Acts. Take note of what is communicated as the gospel spreads through the ancient world. Pay specific attention to how people respond corporately to the gospel.
2. If it came to light that you are struggling to understand or believe the gospel in certain areas, take some time to pray with friends and fellow leaders and ask the Spirit to give you clarity and confidence in the complete and finished work of Christ.
3. Add some of the newer gospel-centered books to your reading list: *What is the Gospel?* by Gregg Gilbert, *Gospel* by JD Greear, *Counterfeit Gospels* by Trevin Wax and *The Explicit Gospel* by Matt Chandler. These books will help you get a better feel for what the gospel is and what it accomplishes.
4. Ask some trusted leaders in your ministry to evaluate how consistently the church is bringing everything back to Jesus.
5. Read *The Expulsive Power of New Affections* by Thomas Chalmers.
6. What next steps can you and your team follow to make your church more gospel-focused and more Jesus-centered? Take time as a team to write down a plan with deadlines and responsibilities to make these next steps a reality.

7. Set aside some time to walk through an excellent self-assessment developed by Tim Keller and David Powlison called, “The Pastor’s Self-Evaluation Questionnaire.”

PRAYER

Father, we pray for Your guidance and help as we dive into this assessment for our personal lives and for the life of this ministry which You have entrusted to us. We cannot do this in our own power. We are not smart enough or talented enough. We need You. Give us courage. Give us gentleness. May whatever transformation we lead our church into first take place in our own hearts and lives. Thank You for this journey and for the opportunity to examine our lives and this ministry. Find us faithful, Father. Amen.