

Discipleship Series
50+ Class – All Saints Presbyterian Church
Fall 2020 – September 13, 2020
Week Two: What is the Gospel?

A few questions to start the conversation...

- What is your definition of “*the gospel*”?
- Do you feel comfortable in sharing *the gospel* with others?
- What is your definition of “*the Kingdom of God*”?

1. The Gospel of Jesus Christ calls one to discipleship.

This “Discipleship Gospel” includes a variety of elements and ways to express it.

NOTE: The following quoted material in Sections 1-9 come from Bill Hull and Ben Sobels, *The Discipleship Gospel* (2018) (emphasis added).

What is “*the gospel*”? When we use the word *gospel*, what do we mean?

“The English word ‘gospel’ finds its origins in the Greek word *evangelion*, which literally means ‘Good News.’ In ancient times, *evangelion* was used to describe an announcement of victory or celebration heralded through the streets for all to hear. As such, the ancient idea of gospel, or Good News, is a declaration (Ps 96:2-3).” (p. 34)

“The gospel is this: ***the Kingdom of God*** has come through Jesus of Nazareth. He is ***Christ***, the King, God’s one and only Son. He ***died*** on the cross for our sins, was buried, and was ***resurrected*** on the third day according to the Scriptures. In His great love and by His amazing grace, God our Father saves everyone who ***repents*** of their sin, ***believes*** the gospel, and ***follows*** Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. When King Jesus returns on the last day, the great Day of Judgment, everyone who followed Him will enter the eternal Kingdom of God.” (p. 109)

Scriptural support for this definition: Mark 1:14-17; Mark 8:27-31; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-10; Matthew 25:31-46.

“... we know this definition isn’t ‘inspired’.... It is a starting point and one example for you to consider. You may, alternatively, reshape it using other biblical language that is better suited to your ministry context.” (p. 110)

“The ***ultimate call*** of Jesus’ gospel is to follow him. That’s why the operative words of our definition are ‘follow Jesus.’ The discipleship gospel makes it clear that Christ’s call is nothing less than following him. ... Our definition calls us to follow Jesus and then emphasizes that only those who do follow Jesus will enter the eternal kingdom of God, just as Jesus taught.” (p. 111)

“...our gospel definition reminds us that when you listen to the way people talk about being a disciple, many of them... make it sound like you can be a Christian and not be a disciple. But a Christian and a disciple aren’t two different things; they’re one and the same... We must stop thinking that a disciple is

only someone who is a 'serious Christian.' Christians are disciples; otherwise they are not Christians." (p. 113-114)

"If you had to summarize in a single phrase the gospel that Jesus preached, it would be 'the kingdom of God.' The kingdom of God has always existed. That was not new with Jesus. What was new with Jesus was that the kingdom of God had become available to human beings to enter into and live in. That's his gospel: the kingdom of God is now available, and if you want to, you can come right on in and live in it. It is tragic that the gospel of Jesus has been substituted for another cheaper, powerless gospel—what might be called the gospel of minimal entrance requirements for getting into heaven when you die."

-Dallas Willard & John Ortberg, *Living in Christ's Presence* p. 52-53.

"The gospel, a narrative declaration of Christ's story, has two aspects to it. First, there are four declarative statements to the gospel, which are about *who* Jesus is and *what* he has done. In this sense, the gospel truly is about Jesus... The second aspect of the gospel is Jesus' imperative statements that call for our response to the gospel. They are how we should act when we hear the gospel." (p. 34)

"The seven elements that make up Jesus' gospel..."

- "There are four **declarative statements** that make up the "gospel proper," that make up the message of Christ's life...
 - God's kingdom is here
 - Jesus is the Christ
 - Jesus died for our sins
 - Jesus was resurrected from the dead on the third day"

- "There are three **imperative statements** that are calls to action, they are our response to the gospel message...
 - Repent of sin
 - Believe the gospel
 - Follow Jesus" (p.35)

Several passages that speak to the Gospel...

Mark 1:14-17 (NIV)—After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "*The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!*"
¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Come, *follow me*," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Mark 8:27-31 (NIV)—Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" ²⁸ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "*You are the Christ*." ³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. ³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief

priests and teachers of the law, and that *he must be killed* and after three days *rise again*.

Romans 1:16 (NIV)—I am not ashamed of *the gospel*, because it is *the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes*: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

1 Corinthians 15:1-5 (NIV)—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. ² *By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word* I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that *Christ died for our sins* according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that *he was raised* on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

“One reason it’s important to distinguish between the declarative statements of the gospel and the imperative responses to the gospel is to help us understand that the imperative responses are actually part of the gospel [i.e., the gospel demands such responses]. In fact, we might say that they are so critically connected that you can’t have one without the other. As such, it’s not enough to hear that ‘the kingdom of God is at hand.’ Jesus made it crystal clear that this declaration demanded a response! When he called his first disciples to repent and believe in the gospel (his declaration), he made it crystal clear what their (and our) response should be. These two imperatives are the first steps of following Jesus.” (p. 36-37)

“...the four declarative statements of ‘the gospel proper’ include: God’s kingdom is here, Jesus is the Christ, Jesus died for our sins, and Jesus was resurrected on the third day. One way to summarize this Good News is simply saying, ‘*Jesus is king!*’ We also listed three imperative responses that are essential to the gospel—repent of sin, believe the gospel, and follow Jesus. One way to summarize the essence of Jesus’ gospel call is to simply say, ‘*Follow Jesus!*’ As such, declaring that Jesus is king and calling people to follow Jesus summarizes the gospel of Jesus.” (p. 47)

3. Too often an incomplete or “false gospel” is taught and believed (a “non-discipleship gospel”)

In his other writings, Bill Hull has identified 5 false gospels in contrast to the true gospel.

<u>Forgiveness-Only Gospel</u> — “Be Forgiven” (False)	<u>Left / Old / New Gospel</u> — “Help the Needy” (False)	<u>Prosperity Gospel</u> — “Claim Your Rights” (False)	<u>Consumer Gospel</u> – “Meet Your Needs” (False)	<u>Right Belief Gospel</u> — “Be Right” (False)	<u>Kingdom of God Gospel</u> — “Follow Me” (True)
<u>Result:</u> -Following Christ is Optional -Passive Sanctification	<u>Result:</u> -Truth is Optional & Uncertain -Accommodate the Culture	<u>Result:</u> -Sense of Entitlement -Manipulation of God	<u>Result:</u> -Self-Indulgent Impatience -Addiction to Desire	<u>Result:</u> -Theological Swagger -Exclusiveness -Detachment	<u>Result:</u> -Activists -Followers Intent on Learning to Live like Jesus

A. The “Forgiveness-Only Gospel”

“...the primary gospel preached in America today, by default, is the ‘*forgiveness-only gospel*’, which is almost exclusively focused on sin and atonement. The forgiveness-only gospel is connected to the idea of saying a *magic prayer* that gets you into heaven one day. It’s a sort of *transaction* between the one

praying and God, where the person gets a *salvation ticket*. Behavior in this ‘gospel’ is in no way connected to this initial transaction. As long as your *barcode* is correct—beep—you’re allowed into heaven.” (p. 10)

The most common gospel preached in the developed world—in places like the United States, Canada, Western Europe, parts of Africa and Asia, Australia, and New Zealand—is the forgiveness-only, consumer gospel. The problem with this gospel is that it’s only part of the truth.” (p. 23)

B. The “Consumer Gospel” – It is all about what the gospel gives me and *my* relationship with God

“As humans, we tend to take the blessings of the gospel—which should lead us to receiving Christ’s love and sharing it with others—and instead hoard them selfishly (even violently!) for ourselves. Doing this distorts the gospel from being others-focused to being *self-focused*.” (p. 23)

C. The “Prosperity Gospel”

“...the most common gospel in the underdeveloped countries is the prosperity gospel, which makes discipleship almost impossible to teach as an essential part of the Good News. This kind of gospel turns everyone into a *consumer of religious goods and services*.” (p. 23-24)

“Two essential truths about the gospel and discipleship... The two underlying key assumptions for the gospel and discipleship... (p. 24)

- “You can’t make a Christlike disciple from a non-discipleship gospel.”
- “The gospel you preach determines the disciples you make.”

“We can capture the primary call of Jesus’ gospel in two words” ‘Follow me.’ Following Jesus involves much more than just praying a one-time prayer for the forgiveness of your sins...” (p. 30)

“When you preach the true gospel, which calls people to be disciples and to make disciples (as Jesus did), you’ll witness the multiplication of Christlike disciples.... Knowing Jesus’ gospel of discipleship also helps us see the continuity between belief and obedience. When Jesus called people to believe in the gospel, he assumed that obedience wasn’t detached from belief but rather the fruit of it...” (p. 32)

“People who preach the me-centered ‘gospels’ effectively rush through ‘the Jesus part’ and focus on the ‘what’s in it for me’ part. I get forgiveness for my sin; I get to go to heaven when I die—it’s all about me. But the discipleship gospel *isn’t about me; it’s about Jesus! It’s also about others*, in the sense that if we truly follow Jesus we will love others like Jesus loves us (Jn 13:34-35). False gospels are self-centered; the true gospel is others-focused.” (p. 71-72)

4. Christians respond to the Gospel by following Jesus—discipleship is not optional

“To join his kingdom, we must become disciples or *‘apprentices’ of Jesus*, people who actually do what he did. That is why we are calling the gospel of the kingdom ‘the discipleship gospel.’ What we mean is that ‘discipleship’—or following Jesus—is an essential part of [or response to] the Good News he preached.” (p. 18)



“Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.” (p. 19, quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

“A faith that isn’t lived out through action is not faith; it’s a life without Christ. Plain and simple, if you want the living Christ, then you must follow him. That is discipleship, and that’s why we call it ‘the discipleship gospel.’” (p. 19)

“Unlike the various false gospels we listed above, the gospel that Jesus preached didn’t separate conversion from discipleship. For Jesus, *discipleship wasn’t an optional ‘add-on’*. His gospel didn’t just call people to pray a little prayer for their sins to be forgiven so they’d get to heaven when they died. When you read the four Gospels in the New Testament, do you ever see Jesus call people to respond to his gospel like this? No, Jesus’ gospel called people to follow him no matter the cost and without conditions or excuses—to the end. Jesus never taught that you could be a Christian and not be his disciple.” (p. 30)

5. Preach the Kingdom—the gospel you preach determines the disciples you make

“The very first thing Jesus said about the gospel, was, ‘*The Kingdom of God is at hand*’ (Mk 1:15). This was not only the first, but also the last topic he taught. In Acts 1:3, after his resurrection, Jesus spent forty days with his disciples teaching them exclusively about the kingdom of God! The Gospels record that Jesus referenced God’s kingdom more than one hundred times during his public ministry. It was his favorite topic. There’s just no question that the kingdom of God was central not only to Jesus’ ministry, but also to his gospel.” (p. 49)

“Our definition of the kingdom of God is this: The kingdom of God is the restoration of God’s rule over all things.” (p. 51)

“The point is that we must begin to help people grasp that following Jesus means entering into a whole new realm of life, a realm in which God’s rule is restored in people’s lives through his gospel. In other words, *eternal life doesn’t begin when we die: it begins when we start following Jesus!* God’s kingdom has come in the person of Jesus Christ, and as we follow him by faith, we’re living in his kingdom...

“...As we communicate the gospel, there’s a dire need to help people understand that when they believe in the gospel of Jesus, they are stepping into something far bigger than themselves. They’re entering into something God established from the beginning of time, something Christ unleashed with power through his life, death, and resurrection, something God will complete in fullness at the end of time with Christ’s second coming, and something that Christ will rule over as king for all eternity—the kingdom of God!” (p. 52-53)

“Here’s a helpful way of thinking about the present realities of God’s kingdom in the world: *Wherever Christ is ruling, there the kingdom of God is*. ...Remember that God’s kingdom advances every time a person hears the gospel and begins following Jesus by faith.” (p. 54-55)

“...Brandon Cook, talks about God ‘*presencing*’ his kingdom in the world. We like this phrase. It’s a clever way of describing God’s kingdom as both being *present and advancing* in the world. When

Spirit-filled disciples are sent from prayerful churches in the power of the Holy Spirit to love and serve others in the world—especially in ways that lead to people being discipled in the gospel—the ‘presencing’ of God’s kingdom multiplies powerfully. This is what Jesus did, it’s what he trained his disciples to do, and it’s what Jesus commands us to do today—both individually and as members of the church.” (p. 56)

“The kingdom was the first thing Jesus spoke about when he began preaching the gospel, and it’s what he is calling us to seek first even now. May the days be gone when we share the gospel without a word about God’s kingdom.” (p. 57)

6. Proclaim Jesus as the Christ

“If Jesus isn’t the Christ, there is no gospel. If he is—and he is indeed—it means that he is God in the flesh, the anointed king of God’s kingdom. What comes to our minds when we think about Jesus being the Christ is essential to our faith in the gospel.” (p. 60)

“The title ‘Christ’ invokes the weight of the entire Old Testament, indeed all Scripture. In fact, it’s the one word that encapsulates all of the Bible’s teachings about God’s promised savior and everything that the Bible reveals about Jesus.... [W]hen we trace the meaning of the word ‘Christ’ back to its origins, it takes us back to the Old Testament Hebrew word for ‘Messiah.’ Both terms literally mean ‘the anointed one.’ ... ‘Christ,’ then, means God’s anointed king. ... To proclaim Jesus as the Christ, then, is to also understand that Jesus is the one about whom all Scripture is written and the one who fulfills all Scripture.” (p. 61)

“If we truly believe that Jesus is the Christ, it has massive implications on our lives. For starters, it means that we surrender our lives to him as our king, seeking to obey all of his commands (Mt 28:20).” (p. 62)

“What brought Jesus’ disciples to the point of confessing him to be the Christ from the heart? Simply stated, it was discipleship. At its core, discipleship is being with Jesus—as we spend time with him, our knowledge about him becomes our experience of him.” (p. 65)

“For Jesus, discipleship wasn’t about getting through a curriculum, as we often do, or training people to ‘do stuff’ for him. Discipleship for Jesus was first and foremost about being with his disciples—being with them so he could influence them to be more like him. The ultimate *goal of discipleship is Christlikeness*, and this transformation occurs as we begin living our lives with Jesus and living for his purposes.” (p. 66)

7. The Gospel is about death and new life (resurrection!)—Christ’s...and then ours! —death to sin and new life in Christ

“...personal faith in Christ’s death and resurrection, biblically understood, leads us to die to sin and live in the power of Christ’s resurrection.” (p. 69)

“What did Jesus mean by *‘take up our cross’*? First, we need to know that taking up your cross is something all followers of Jesus are to do daily... Second, taking up your cross begins with denying yourself, denying the selfish and sinful desires of your flesh. But it doesn’t stop with just denial. Third, it also involves putting those selfish and sinful desires to death. We need to crucify our sinful desires, to

use the cross-language of Jesus. Taking up our cross means putting to death the sinful desires of our flesh every day.” (p. 70)

“To live in Christ’s resurrection power, then, is to follow Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Specifically, it’s to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, who raised Christ from the dead, to die to sin and live in obedience to Christ.... Christ calls us to follow him, and our faith in his resurrection fills us with power from the Holy Spirit to obey. In other words, Christ has a purpose in filling his followers with resurrection power—obedience. This is the ‘obedience of faith’ that Paul writes about as he lays out the gospel in Romans 1:1-6.” (p. 76)

“On more than one occasion, I have taught that you give up the right to say ‘no’ to Jesus when you begin following him. If you don’t do what he says, don’t trick yourself into thinking you’re following Jesus. ... In the midst of all this talk of total obedience, remember that Jesus commands only what he empowers. If he asks us to do something, he’ll provide the way for us to do it.” (p. 77)

“The Holy Spirit meets us in obedience.” (p. 77, quoting Dallas Willard)

8. Follow Jesus and be saved

“The most controversial element of the discipleship gospel is the imperative call to follow Jesus. The non-discipleship gospels being preached today do not include following Jesus at all—not one of them. As soon as following Jesus becomes an optional add-on to the gospel, it’s a death sentence for disciple making. If we’re deceived into thinking that following Jesus isn’t essential, then we won’t do it.” (p. 79)

“But to think that saying a one-time prayer is the only response to the gospel that Christ calls us to is, in a word, delusional. For starters, praying a one-time prayer in no way reflects the teaching of Jesus.” (p. 80)

Mark 8:35 (NIV)—For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

Scripture that speaks of the high cost of the gospel: Matthew 19 – 22; Matthew 24:13; Luke 14:25-27; Luke 14:33; John 15:20. (p. 83)

“Following Jesus isn’t us working for our salvation; it is God working out salvation in us! ... Following Jesus happens only and always in the power of the Spirit....” (p. 84)

9. Repent and Believe

“The gospel demands a response from us, which is the call to follow Jesus. Our savior was unmistakably clear about how we are to start following him: ‘Repent and believe in the gospel’ (Mk 1:15).” (p. 89)

“When you listen to many gospel presentations and read most gospel tracts today, they deal lightly with repentance, if at all. The proliferation of non-discipleship gospels in the American church has resulted in the removal of repentance from the gospel.” (p. 92)

2 Corinthians 7:10 (NIV)—Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

“Left to ourselves, we won’t repent; really, we can’t repent without the Spirit.... Like two sides of the same coin, repentance and belief go together. They are the first steps of following Jesus. ...You can’t repent and not believe. Likewise, you can’t believe if you don’t repent.” (p. 94)

“Gift-card belief says, If I believe in the gospel, then I get stuff from God! We get forgiveness, we get to go to heaven, and we don’t need a life change—not one little bit. Gift-card belief doesn’t require repentance and isn’t connected to discipleship at all. For people with gift-card belief, obedience isn’t necessary, discipleship is optional, and displaying the fruit of the Spirit is just for ‘serious Christians.’ To require such things as necessary for salvation is equivalent to waging war on God’s grace (or so they’ve been taught). Something’s amiss here. In the name of ‘God’s grace,’ belief has become powerless and passive...” (p. 97)

10. Gospel Fluency

NOTE: The quotes in sections 10 – 13 are from Jeff Vanderstelt, Gospel Fluency—Speaking the Truths of Jesus into the Everyday Stuff of Life (2017) (emphasis added).

“The gospel is the good news of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, who is King. The gospel saves and brings God’s rule into our lives (his kingdom) in order to bring the good news of his power into the world. The gospel changes us from the inside out and spreads through our lives and lips to the world by his Spirit.... This is the gospel that is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. This is what we have been saved by.” (p. 74)

11. Faithfully speaking the Gospel

None of us are as faithful as we should be in speaking the gospel. Why? Because, though we have the gospel in our heads and hearts, at times we lack the courage or the faithfulness to speak the gospel to others. We are timid, unsure of ourselves, fearful of others, and so we just don’t speak. We all need to be, and hopefully are, moving toward a life of greater faith and faithfulness.

“We all struggle with unbelief in God because the message of who he is and what he has done for us can sound unbelievable at times. We all slip in and out of confidence that what he has done for us in Jesus is sufficient for us today.” (p. 21)

“A life of true living is a life of faith in Jesus, a life of believing in Jesus in the everyday stuff of life. I’m still learning how to live like that. I’m still an unbeliever in many ways. And yet, I don’t want to stay that way. I want all of my life to be marked by faith in Jesus. ... God is intent on making everything about Jesus because it is through him that all things came into existence and it is in him that they are sustained (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:15-20). ... God also wants to rescue you from unbelief and sanctify you to become like Jesus. Sanctification is just a big word for becoming more and more like Jesus through faith in Jesus. You become like what you believe in. So



becoming like Jesus requires believing in him more and more in every part of your life. Sanctification is moving from unbelief in Jesus to belief in him in the everyday stuff of life.” (p. 21-22)

“I have a community of people around me who are also professing unbelievers. They believe in Jesus, but not all the time for everything. Not yet, at least. ... We are journeying together, moving from unbelief to belief in Jesus more each day—and sometimes less the next day.” (p. 22)

“We all need help because we can come up with plenty of reasons not to believe, not to hope, and not to trust God’s word and work for us.... I believe the only hope for all of us is the gospel of Jesus Christ and communities that live life together while proclaiming this gospel into one another’s lives daily—*gospel-fluent communities*. ... Jesus said we are to make disciples who can make disciples (Mt 28:18-20), and a disciple of Jesus should know, believe, and be able to speak the gospel. He or she should be capable of leading others to know, believe and speak the gospel.” (p. 23)

12. Give them Jesus

Consider starting with Jesus. In our care for others we often will give them encouragement, advice, and support in other ways. But we often stop short and fail to give them Jesus. Jesus is what they need much more than our advice or encouragement. Don’t stop until you give them Jesus.

“People share their struggles, and, with every good intention, others give good advice or try to step in to be the solution themselves. People do need answers. They are in need of help. But we fail to truly help them if we don’t give them Jesus. He is the best answer and the most powerful help they can receive.” (p. 27)

“‘Speaking the truth in love,’ for Paul, (Eph 4:11 – 21) is shorthand for ‘speaking what is true about Jesus’ to another—that is, speaking the gospel to one another. Paul knows that if people are going to grow up into Christ in every way, they need to hear the truths of Jesus (the gospel) and learn to speak them into everything. ... As my friends Steve Timmis and Tim Chester like to say: ‘What’s the question? Jesus is the answer. What’s the problem? Jesus is the solution.’” (p. 28)

“...if we are to help one another grow up into Christ in every way, we need to learn how to speak the truths of Christ into everything—every aspect of life, every situation we face, and every issue we address.... If we speak the truths about Jesus into each of these issues or situations, we will grow up together in every way with Christ, which also means we will grow up in every way into Christ.” (p. 30)

“What do we tell people about sexual purity and sexual immorality? We give them Jesus! ... Speaking the truths of Jesus for rightly ordering our budgets. Speak truths of Jesus for finding a spouse. Speak the truths of Jesus for how we respond to our employers or employees. Speak the truths about Jesus for how we parent our children. Speak the truths of Jesus into everything.” (p. 34)

“Gospel fluency won’t happen through you until it happens to you. You talk most about what you love most.” (p. 197)

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NIV)—If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and

all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

“At the heart of the gospel is the love of God. And if we speak about the love of God without love for people, the noise of our lives will drown out the words coming from our lips.” (p. 198)

“Jesus suffered and died to forgive you of your sins, make you a child of God, and pour the love of God into your heart by his Spirit. So ask him to give you a heart for people.” (p. 200)

13. Become Gospel-fluent people—this comes through gospel immersion

Our “sharing the gospel” can be like ships passing in the night. It seems to those who hear us that we are speaking a foreign language. Often we’re answering questions people are not asking. Too many times what we share is not received as good news; it just seems to be a “canned” presentation. We must do better than this. We must become gospel-fluent people.

“In Sunday school classes or church courses, we teach believers to sprinkle some gospel truths into their conversations. Or we give them a short presentation to share or a diagram to draw, which works really well if people are asking the questions the presentation or drawing addresses. However, in most cases, we and the people with whom we speak are like ships passing in the night because we are either giving answers to questions they are not asking or we are speaking a language none of us really understand that well. ... So we go about ‘preaching’ gospel snippets, thinking we’re speaking the gospel to others, but what people hear is not good news. Oh, it might contain gospel elements, but they don’t hear it as good news because they are not hearing the truths of Jesus applied to their lives and situations. What they get is just a set of phrases and propositions that don’t make much sense to their context, culture, or language.” (p. 38-39)

“...most Christians don’t really know *why* we need the gospel, *what* it is, why it is good news, and what it actually does—at least not enough to apply it to the everyday stuff of life... Most believers have become gospel-snippet people, who speak gospel catchphrases. They’re speaking gospelish, but not the actual gospel in a way people can hear and believe.... Some of these believers get into debates and just speak louder... Then they quote passages from the Bible about rejoicing in suffering for the sake of the gospel, when, in fact, people are just rejecting what they are saying because no good news is coming through.” (p. 39)

“I believe such fluency is what God wants his people to experience with the gospel. He wants them to be able to translate the world around them and the world inside of them through the lens of the gospel—the truths of God revealed in the person and work of Jesus. Gospel-fluent people think, feel, and perceive everything in light of what has been accomplished in the person and work of Jesus Christ. They see the world differently. They think differently. They feel differently.” (p. 41-42)

“...those who are experiencing gospel fluency are experiencing ongoing transformation themselves. ... They are experiencing ongoing change as the truths of the gospel are brought to bear on their thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and actions, transforming them into greater Christlikeness every day. ... They are growing up into Christ in every way because they are learning to hear and speak the truths of Jesus Christ into everything. They are becoming gospel fluent. ... The gospel is becoming their native tongue because it was through the gospel that they were born again. It is by the gospel that they find themselves

growing up into Christ and they are convinced that the gospel will keep them to the end and perfect them into the true image of Christ.” (p. 42)

“Gospel fluency requires immersion into a community of people so saturated with the gospel of Jesus Christ that they just can’t stop speaking the truths of Jesus wherever they go and in whatever situations they find themselves.” (p. 44)

“Gospel fluency is developed by being immersed into a Jesus-saturated community. A Jesus saturated community knows and speaks the gospel every day into everything, so that all parts of our lives grow up into Christ and are eventually fully transformed by and submitted to Jesus Christ, who is everything for us (Eph: 1:22-23; 4:15; Col. 1:15-20).” (p. 45)

“We are saved by the power of God for the purposes of God, so that God might be made known and Jesus might be glorified. We are God’s display people showing the world what he is like. We are also his declaration people, who declare who God is and what he has done by proclaiming the gospel.” (p. 185 – 186)

1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)—But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

“This is our identity. This is our calling. Show the world the love of the Father, the healing and reconciling power of the Spirit, and the sacrificial servanthood of the Son in how you live.” (p. 186)

“Peter knows that not everyone will receive them or respond to them well. They may suffer for living God-displaying, God-glorifying lives. Some may reject and persecute them, while others may be led to give thanks and praise to God for them. Either way, Peter calls them to live a life that flows from the gospel. And, as a result, Peter wants them to be prepared to give the gospel—to give Jesus—as the reason why they do what they do. In other words, Peter is calling them to live a life that demands a gospel explanation—a life that makes no sense without sharing the truths about Jesus to explain why they do what they do.” (p. 186 – 187)

“We need to do more than just be nice. We need to tell them why we live as we do.” (p. 191)

“When we live Jesus-like lives but don’t share the reason we can and do, we rob Jesus of his glory. He deserves the credit for what we do, not us.” (p. 193)