

HOW THIS STUDY IS ORGANIZED

The Gospel-Centered Life contains nine lessons that are grouped around three themes:

What is the gospel?

LESSON 1: THE GOSPEL GRID

If the gospel is constantly “bearing fruit and growing” (Col. 1:6), then everything has to do with the gospel—God, humanity, salvation, worship, relationships, shopping, recreation, work, personality...everything! The objective in this lesson is to establish a framework for talking about the gospel. This framework will get worked out in greater detail over the next two sessions.

LESSON 2: PRETENDING AND PERFORMING

Each of us tends to “shrink the cross,” which is to say that something is lacking in our understanding, appreciation, or application of Jesus’ sacrifice for our sin. This manifests itself in two main ways: pretending and performing. Pretending minimizes sin by making ourselves out to be something we are not. Performing minimizes God’s holiness by reducing his standard to something we can meet, thereby meriting his favor. Both are rooted in an inadequate view of God’s holiness and our identity.

LESSON 3: BELIEVING THE GOSPEL

We have been focusing on the ways we minimize the gospel—the negative. This lesson turns our attention to the positive: What remedies has God given in the gospel to keep us from shrinking the cross and depending on our own effort?

What does the gospel do in us?

LESSON 4: LAW AND GOSPEL

Continuing to think about how the gospel interacts with our lives, but now we now turn to consider the gospel’s relationship to the law. What is the law? Does God expect me to obey it? What is the purpose of the law? How does the law help me to believe the gospel? How does the gospel help me to obey the law?

LESSON 5: REPENTANCE

This lesson deals with repentance. In our culture, this usually sounds like a bad thing, but 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. Biblical repentance frees us from our own devices and makes a way for the power of the gospel to bear fruit in our lives.

LESSON 6: HEART IDOLATRY

The Christian walk consists of two repeated steps: repentance and faith. Turning our attention to the topic of faith, we focus on how we grow through believing the gospel. This week's goal is to take "believing the gospel" out of the abstract and make it concrete.

How does the gospel work through us?

LESSON 7: MISSION

The gospel is simultaneously at work in us and through us. Inwardly, our desires and motives are being changed as we repent and believe the gospel. As we experience Christ's love in this way, we are compelled to engage those around us with the same kind of redemptive love. God's grace brings renewal everywhere, in us and through us.

LESSON 8: FORGIVENESS

The gospel that works in us always works through us. It shows its power in our relationships and actions. One key way this happens is when we forgive others biblically.

LESSON 9: CONFLICT

Conflict is something we all experience (regularly), but often handle in very fleshly ways. The gospel gives us a pattern and a means to healthy conflict resolution.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

The Gospel-Centered Life is designed for small group study, although it is possible to work through the study independently or in a larger group. The tone of the material assumes a small-group format, because this is the setting we've found to be the most effective.

Each of these lessons follows a similar format including these elements...

BIBLE CONVERSATION

We want to start by talking about the Bible together. As the name suggests, this section is designed to stimulate your thinking and prepare you and your group for the ideas that will be presented in each lesson.

ARTICLE

The written articles are the primary source of the teaching content for each lesson. They are short, clear teachings of the concepts being presented in the lesson. Each week, your group will take a few minutes and read the Article out loud together.

DISCUSSION

This section is where we communally process the concepts being taught in the Article. Often the Discussion will work in conjunction with the next section (Exercise) to help flesh out the teaching and apply it to our lives in concrete ways.

EXERCISE

Each of the exercises in this study are designed to help you make practical applications of the concepts being taught, or help you understand the content at a deeper heart level. Be sure allow enough time for your group to adequately work through and discuss the exercises as directed.

WRAP-UP

The Wrap-Up gives the leader the chance to answer any last minute questions, reinforce ideas, and most importantly spend a few minutes praying as group.

WHAT TO EXPECT

EXPECT TO BE CHALLENGED...

most of us have reduced the gospel to something much less than it is. As you work through each lesson, expect your thinking about the gospel to be challenged and expanded.

EXPECT THE HOLY SPIRIT ...

to be the one ultimately responsible for the growth of your group, and for the change in each person's life—including your own. Relax and trust him.

EXPECT YOUR GROUP'S AGENDA TO INCLUDE...

an open, give-and-take discussion of the article, the questions, and the exercises. Also expect times of prayer at each meeting.

EXPECT STRUGGLE...

and don't be surprised to find that your group is a mixture of enthusiasm, hope, and honesty, along with indifference, anxiety, skepticism, guilt, and covering up. We are all people who really need Jesus every day. So expect your group to be made up of people who wrestle with sin and have problems—people just like yourself!

EXPECT A GROUP LEADER...

who desires to serve you, but who also needs Jesus as much as you do. No leader should be put on a pedestal, so expect that your group leader will have the freedom to share openly about his or her own weaknesses, struggles, and sins.