

# Getting the Gospel

*Core Class I at Leroy Community Chapel*

Mark Spansel

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## What are Core Classes?

Mission matters to us at Leroy Community Chapel. God's mission that is! Just what is God's mission? To make His name glorious as He declares His fame to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 43:7; 48:11; 66:18-19). How does He do that? He demonstrates what a great God He is through His plan to save sinners based only on the work of His Son, Jesus! Simply put, God's mission is His glory. His glory is seen most radiantly in His work of redemption. That's where His mission touches us. Leroy Chapel is a group of people who have been redeemed and want others to find salvation in Jesus also.

So, our mission is "to completely transform our families, community, and world into devoted followers of Jesus Christ through the Word of God." We exist to further the work of God in the world, and we do that through joyfully embracing the Gospel and living in the grace God supplies. Our mission isn't clever, slick, or changing with each new year ... our mission is to do what Jesus told all His followers to do – "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ..." (Matthew 28:19-20). That means that your mission as a part of Leroy Community Chapel is to walk with God and help others do the same. Every member has this mission, and our Core Classes are aimed at helping everyone understand *His* mission, *Our* mission, and *Your* mission.

In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus gave the greatest commandment – "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ... and love your neighbor as yourself." If you learn anything else at Leroy Chapel, we pray you learn to love God. So how, you ask, do I do that? It starts with loving His story, the story of His glory – the Gospel, and this is the foundation for our *Core Class I*, the **Gospel Class**. In this class we will lay the Biblical foundation for Gospel and work out the practical ramifications for your life and how we do church ministry. Next, loving God involves learning about and loving the character of God. We do this through a life-long journey of Bible study. The Word of God contains all we need to know about who He is, and what He has done. This forms *Core Class II*, our **Doctrine Class**. Finally, as you grow in your understanding of, and love for, Gospel-saturated living; and learn to walk in the God-revealed truths of the Scriptures; you will delight in the plan God has for your life. This plan is for you to be a devoted follower of Jesus, using your gifts to bless others, and pouring your life into the Kingdom mission of God here on earth. This is our *Core Class III*, the **Disciple Class**. The church exists because of the never-ending cycle of God's mission entrusted to faithful followers who entrust it to other faithful followers, who never stop loving God and loving others enough to make sure they don't miss out on the grace of God in the Gospel.

This great cycle is called Discipleship, or as we like to say around Leroy Chapel – transformation. And we want you to know that there is no greater joy than this Gospel life. There is no greater truth than Bible truths. And there is no greater purpose than giving yourself to the cause of Christ in the world. We pray these *Core Classes* are used by God as an instrument of transformation in your life, and that you in turn will be used as an instrument of transformation in the lives of others ... many others! Thanks for joining us in this mission.

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## Why Start with the Gospel?

### 1 – Because the Gospel is all about God

- Any church that does not begin with God will not end at God. We believe that God is glorious above all and the Gospel is the story of His glory put on display for the whole world to see.
- Any gospel that makes man the central figure in redemption has missed the mark and will elevate a man-centered Christian life, and church life. Man exists for God, and not the other way around.

***John 17:3 – “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”***

♥ Eternal life, or salvation, is not mere “fire-insurance” or becoming a “good person”, above all it is knowing God!

### 2 – Because the Gospel is the foundation of the Church

- The Church exists to tell the story of the Gospel, and as it does so, it will flourish.

***Matthew 16:16-18 – “Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’”***

♥ The Church’s one message is that Jesus is the Savior of the world, come from God, to rescue a people for Himself.

### 3 – Because the Gospel is the main point of the Bible

- Everything inspired and preserved in Scripture is to lead one to faith in Jesus Christ. It is not a lot of good stories of good people, it is one story all pointing to one man.

***John 20:31 – “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”***

♥ The Scriptures are to be read to build one’s

Notes:

We will be working out the profound impact this has on every area of church ministry in the second half of this class.

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understanding of God and love for His Son.

## **What does the Bible say about the Gospel?**

- If in fact the main point of the Bible is the Gospel, what do we learn about the Gospel from the way the Bible talks about it? This is a brief survey of the word translated *Gospel* (euangelion) that means “good news.” What are the components of this good news that we are to see from the story of the Bible?

- 1 – It is the good news that there is a living God  
→ Acts 14:15
- 2 – It is the good news that God’s power and authority has come to earth  
→ Romans 10:15; Mark 1:14
- 3 – It is the good news that Jesus Christ brought the Kingdom of God to earth  
→ Acts 8:12; Romans 1:1-3; Luke 2:10-11
- 4 – It is the good news of the power of God to transform  
→ Matthew 4:23; Luke 4:18
- 5 – It is the good news that Jesus died for sin  
→ 1 Corinthians 15:1-3
- 6 – It is the good news that Jesus conquered death  
→ 1 Corinthians 15:4; 2 Timothy 2:8
- 7 – It is the good news of the promise of the Spirit  
→ Luke 3:16-18 (Acts 1:5-8)
- 8 – It is the good news of the offer of salvation to man  
→ Ephesians 1:13; Romans 1:16
- 9 – It is the good news of peace with God and men  
→ Acts 10:36; Ephesians 6:15
- 10 – It is the good news of eternal life  
→ 2 Timothy 1:10
- 11 – It is the good news that reaches to all peoples of the earth  
→ Galatians 3:8; Ephesians 3:6
- 12 – It is the good news of the grace of God  
→ Acts 20:24 (2 Corinthians 8:9; 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 3:24)

- All of these statements are the Bible’s explanation of the Gospel as they unfold the good news of God and His redeeming work. And yet, all these essential parts of the Gospel are of no good unless they find their full expression in *delighting in God Himself, and the great gift of His beloved Son.*

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These points were adapted from chapter 2 of [God is the Gospel](#) by John Piper

- The climax and the glory of the Gospel story are found in the face of Jesus!

*2 Corinthians 4:5-6 – “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

“Until the gospel *events* of Good Friday and Easter and the gospel *promises* of justification and eternal life lead you to behold and embrace God *himself* as your highest joy, you have not embraced the gospel of God. You have embraced some of his gifts. You have rejoiced over some of his rewards. You have marveled at some of his miracles. But you have not yet been awakened to why the gifts, the rewards, and the miracles have come. They have come for one great reason: that you might behold forever the glory of God in Christ, and by beholding become the kind of person who delights in God above all things, and by delighting display his supreme beauty and worth with ever-increasing brightness and bliss forever.”

- John Piper, God is the Gospel, pg. 38.

- When the apostle Paul was glorying in this great gift of God that made everything else he had ever gained look like utter garbage he described it as, “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,” and labeled it as, “gaining Christ” (Philippians 3:8). He didn’t see it as merely “getting heaven” or “a better quality of life now” and certainly not as just the Christian starting blocks. For Paul, gaining Christ was getting the most glorious thing God could ever give.

♥ Faulty views of the Gospel permeate the Church landscape thus diminishing the clarity, purity, and power of God’s one great story.

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## Avoiding Incomplete “Christian” Gospels

- To preach an incomplete gospel is to preach a false gospel. Anything that detracts from the saving work of Jesus on the cross by adding to it, or taking something away, is error, and while often subtle and spiritual sounding, leads to destruction. Contending for the true Gospel is fighting for the once-for-all, completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross **and** being found “in Him.”

- In addition to preaching an incomplete, thus false, message, we falter in just what we are calling people to when we call them to the Gospel. Contending for the true Gospel is fighting for believing objective truth **and** responding with faith and repentance.

### 1 – The “Go Do It” Gospel

(Little: Work of Jesus with Big: Found in Him)

- Here the completed work of Christ is minimized, therefore the call is for the recipient to go accomplish great things for God. Hard work and duty are substituted for joy and delight in the work of the cross. This is a focus on responding to an inspiring, “God will give you the power to be all that you can be” message, much like a coach at half-time to his players.

\* Remedy: You can do nothing in your own power, and your hard work does nothing to gain you favor with God. The true Gospel is a message of rest and joy, not busyness and duty.

### 2 – The “Therapeutic” Gospel

(Big: Work of Jesus with Little: Found in Him)

- This is a message of the power of the cross, but it is faulty in applying it to one’s new identity. Here the recipient has access to the power of God, but is always left wrestling for “more of God” to be different. This is a focus on responding to a gentle call to be a better person on the inside much like a psychologist to his patient.

\* Remedy: You are a new creature. Your identity is not

Notes:

#### The Message:

What Jesus Has Done  
vs.  
What Man Receives

#### The Call:

A Focus on Facts  
vs.  
A Focus on Feelings

- *Errors in Message ...*

Symptoms?

- People busy serving yet who feel inadequate

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Symptoms?

- The person sees salvation as for them, and forgets of its role in others

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found in past experiences or your behavior, but is found in being a child of God and called to the mission of Christ.

### 3 – The “Altar-Call” Gospel

(Little: Believe Truth with Big: Respond)

- More often than not some external means of decision is used, such as raising a hand, walking an aisle, signing a card, repeating a prayer. Here the recipient is treated as a number to tally, and “feeling different” is the measure of conversion over an understanding of truth. This is a focus on responding to a subjective, man-centered message presenting God as the answer to all of life’s problems.

\* The remedy: Speak the truth about the condition of man and the redeeming work of Jesus. Trust God to save people, not clever schemes or persuasive people.

*“The bad fruit of false evangelism:*

*- Worldly people feeling assurance because they made a decision one time*

*- Real revival being lost amid our own manufactured and scheduled meetings that we euphemistically call “revivals” (as if we could determine where and when the wind of God’s Spirit will move).*

*- Church memberships markedly larger than the number of those involved with the church.*

*- Inaction in our own lives, as we ignore the evangelistic mandate – the call to share the good news.”*

*- Mark Dever, The Gospel and Personal Evangelism, pg. 111.*

### 4 – The “Just Believe” Gospel

(Big: Believe Truth with Little: Respond)

- Often this incomplete gospel call can end in the same response of #3, people believing a body of facts, but no real heart change. Here, the call is to an intellectual exercise and a volitional choice, but repentance is often soft peddled and the feelings described as something that will come later. This is a focus on responding to objective facts in a classroom-like manner, coaxing with logic, evidences, and a rational decision.

\* The Remedy: Real change is heart change. We are not trying to win an argument or get someone to agree with a set of truths alone. We aim for the heart to be moved away from other gods to worship the one true God.

- We must come to deeply understand and deeply embrace

Notes:

· Errors in Call ...

Symptoms?

- Easily frustrated and prone to drift when circumstances go badly

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Symptoms?

- Knows stuff, lives little of it

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the true Gospel story and the God of the Gospel so that we can graciously and powerfully stand against error.

## **Preach the Complete Gospel Story**

- There are many “approaches” to telling this story, but the “chapters” must all be there. This story can be told in five minutes, or told over five years with someone. Each chapter involves significant truth necessary for someone to embrace Jesus as their Savior and be reconciled to God.

*“When we celebrate the Gospel of Christ and the love of God, and when we lift up the gift of salvation, let us do it in such a way that people will see through it to God Himself. May those who hear the Gospel from our lips know that salvation is the blood-bought gift of seeing and savoring the glory of Christ. May they believe and say, ‘Christ is all!’ Or, to use the words of the psalmist, ‘May those who love your salvation say evermore, ‘God is great!’ not mainly, ‘Salvation is great,’ but ‘God is great!’”*

John Piper, God is the Gospel, pg. 16

These are the facts, and they are undisputed ...

### **Chapter 1: God**

Before the world began or was even a thought, God was. He did not begin with creation nor does He exist in creation. We say that He is transcendent or separate from His creation and completely satisfied in Himself. He lacks nothing in His holy perfection, and is the only one worthy object of worship. He is not a distant Creator, but everywhere present in His creation. He exists for Himself and His own glory. We believe in the eternal Godhead, one God existing in three persons, each fully God. He is completely satisfied in the relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit. He is Love, and desires communion with those He created. God is truth, the revelation of truth, and the great communicator of truth to the world. This one true God is the standard for every Law, expecting perfect obedience, and judging rebellion. It is His one purpose to get glory for Himself through the rescue and restoration of a fallen world.

### **Chapter 2: Man**

In the Garden of Eden God created mankind, male and female, as image-bearers of the Triune Godhead. Man was created as the highpoint of all creation to rule over the

Notes:

• Your Story & Understanding God:

• Your Story & Understanding Man:

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creation. In man's work he reflects the creative attributes of God, able to imagine, invent, and advance the purposes of God in the world. While mankind has intrinsic value as the object of God's creative purposes, he is created to be a worshipper. This is where things go tragically wrong. Satan, a fallen angel, convinced mankind that it was better to be worshipped than to worship. Why settle for worshipping God, when you can be like Him? Why be God-centered when you can be self-centered? Through the self-glorifying choices of all of mankind's father and mother, sin entered the human race, and with sin death. This fall is complete and ultimate; it affects every human and has no escape clause. Unholy, self-worshipping man is forever separated from holy, glory-seeking God. Sin has no human remedy, and earns only heavenly wrath. And now, sad but true, everyone rebels against his Creator, exchanges truth for lies, and desires only that which pleases his sinful flesh. It is the one purpose of man to get glory for himself, through human achievement and self-love. This stands squarely in the way of God's agenda, and the reason for which God created the world and man himself. And the sad reality is that man at his most wicked worst and man in his most noble efforts comes to the same tragic end – the eternal judgment of God.

### ***Chapter 3: Jesus***

God, in His unique wisdom, devised a plan that displays His glory and delivers mankind from eternal wrath. His answer – the God-Man Jesus! God the Father sent the second member of the Trinity, the Son, to earth as the only acceptable sacrifice for sin. Taking on humanity and living in perfect obedience, the man Jesus became the sin-bearer for all who believe. In the place of sinful men, who deserve the full weight of judgment for their rebellion, Jesus became the substitute consequence taker. In his life and death, he diverted the wrath of God from deserving sinners to himself, a flawless Savior. Through the life, death, burial, and miraculous resurrection of Jesus, life was made secure for those who believe. In the life of this one man, God's holy wrath is satisfied, sin is punished, and the fallen are rescued, restored to relationship with the Father, and clothed in the righteousness of Jesus with whom the Father is pleased. Not only is this the most glorious and agonizing solution to the problem of the human race, but it is the only solution. Jesus came to save sinners!

### ***Chapter 4: Respond***

*Notes:*

• Your Story & Understanding Jesus:

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No one chooses God. No act of the will or reasoning of the mind can independently decide to follow Jesus. Dead men don't walk; much less embrace their sinfulness and desperate need for a Savior. The story of the Gospel is the story of God's doing in the hearts of His children. He gives life to those He chooses. He grants faith based entirely on His own predetermined plan, not the goodness or vileness of the soul involved. We glory in an independent God, not swayed nor manipulated by the emotions of men. And in the same breath we tell men everywhere to repent. The Gospel story demands a response – declare your hopelessness, turn from your sin, and believe in Jesus! This kind of belief goes far deeper than intellectual acknowledgement of Bible facts; far deeper than a fear of hell. Biblical belief is a gracious gift of God that softens the rebel's heart, transforms from the inside out, and places ones allegiance behind the glory of God and God alone - this is saving faith, this is Biblical belief! Repentance and faith are not only the starting blocks to following Jesus; they are the daily building blocks to a life lived in the Gospel. The Spirit of God enables the child of God to respond to the Gospel, and by His grace he never stops responding.

### **Chapter 5: Glory**

The story ends in glorious triumph. The King returns in royal splendor, His loyal followers celebrating His victory, all creation rescued – declaring the glory of God, and every enemy of the cross of Christ put down once and for all. The resurrection of Jesus three days after His crucifixion is a guarantee of the final resurrection of all people – some to eternal bliss and others to eternal punishment. All the promises of God are fulfilled in His final appearing. Every knee that previously disobeyed Him will bow, every tongue that mocked Him will declare that the story of the cross was true and Jesus is the victor! The hope of glory is for every follower of Jesus the great motivator to a life well lived. This produces the call to missional living. It is the great inheritance of a life lived in a foreign land. The Lord in His glory abiding with His people without sin, suffering, or decay forever celebrating this greatest story ever told – this is our reward!

♥ May this story be our favorite story. May our story be woven together with this story so intimately that people

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• Your Story & Understanding Respond:

• Your Story & Understanding Glory:

*“When salvation is dearly seen as God’s work of sovereign grace, grace is no longer enaciated, weakened, colorless. Dwelling on divine supremacy in salvation magnifies a grace-exalting God and humbles us. Saving grace means that God is neither coerced nor constrained by our value as humans. He is not obliged to save, but still He does ... We aren’t seeking just “decisions for Jesus” but awe-inspired worshippers, people who have tasted and seen that the Lord is full of grace and who can’t hold back their joy!”*

*Will Metzger, [Tell the Truth](#), pg 151*

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can't distinguish ours from what God has done in us!

Notes:

## **What the Gospel Combats**

- Often times we catch glimpses of an unbiblical gospel through the observable effects in a church culture or within certain individuals, and we would do well to point some of these out before we consider what the Gospel produces in lives and within a church.

### 1 – Legalism

*Seeking to achieve forgiveness from God and acceptance by God through obedience to God*

- Legalism isn't an external set of behavior one holds to or runs from, rather legalism is an internal heart condition that proudly trusts in his own activity for God's grace. The legalist never says this, that's far too authentic, he simply lives with an air of superiority and a critical spirit, looking for his performance to score him points with God and others.

### 2 – Condemnation

*Living under a weight of guilt and shame rather than relishing the finished work of the cross and the freedom it purchased*

- Condemnation heaps burdens on oneself, either rejecting the true forgiveness of God or believing somehow God is more honored by feeling bad about oneself. The one struggling under condemnation fails to rightly grasp the cost of the cross and true joyful worship that ought to result. He is more focused on his sin than on God's grace.

### 3 – Subjectivism

*Basing one's view of God on changing feelings, emotions, and circumstances*

- Subjectivism loves God one minute and then has forsaken Him the next. Living life based on the subjective emotions of the moment rather than the unchanging truth of eternity brings an uncertainty and fickleness that is never able to get traction in the Christian life. This life will have suffering, Jesus promised it. But He is ever constant and faithful to supply the grace at just the right time.

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#### 4 - Sentimentalism

*Feeling happy thoughts toward God without any real conviction to following Him*

- Sentimentalists love church when it makes them feel empowered. They like the music because it gives them joy. There is a feelings-oriented, man-based religion that scarcely goes below the surface and rarely has any lasting impact on themselves or others.

#### 5 - Pluralism

*Adding Jesus into the other belief systems one has because it doesn't hurt to have God on your side too*

- Pluralism readily accepts all things except not accepting. The pluralist is one who goes to church because he wouldn't want to offend God or do anything to mess with his karma. He believes he can accept and follow God but doesn't have to believe everything the Bible has to say, after all it was written by man. He prides himself on being open-minded, but in reality can't determine what is worth standing up for at all.

#### 6 - Individualism

*A fierce commitment to self-protection and isolation believing that you can only really rely on yourself*

- The individualist actually despises church fellowship and all those words that call him to open his life up to others. He will attend church to find useful tools for helping himself get better and for building up his knowledge so that he doesn't require the input of anyone else. He will opt out of all small groups and say that his relationship with the Lord is between him and God.

#### 7 - Intellectualism

*Placing confidence in one's own ability to reason and understand minimizing faith and the affections*

- The intellectual is always in the habit of arguing because he believes that winning an argument produces change. He is often the skeptic who would rather debate theology than repent of sin. He wishes they wouldn't sing so many songs and hates to be in the room when a response is being

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invited.

### 8 – Religion

*A man-made set of traditions and dogmas that must be followed for God to be appeased*

- Religious people like traditions and want others to keep them like they do. Religious people want strict obedience to the way their set of performing has been performed through the ages. They like forms of worship over the function of worship. They don't care much about what is going on inside someone's heart as long as they are "doing well" on the outside. They don't see a need to defend their beliefs from objective truth because it's just what they've always believed and you just have to "have faith." They don't do that well at explaining why you should believe that or live that way, but that you should. Religion is a godless gospel that parades around as God's best friend ... run from it with everything within you!

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## What the Gospel Produces ...

- Christians and the Church at large have all too often put the Gospel story in the category of “for beginners” or treated it as the elementary teachings that we move on from rather than the foundational teachings that we base everything upon. This makes *all* the difference in personal spirituality and corporate ministry.

*“The Gospel isn’t one class among many that you’ll attend during your life as a Christian – the Gospel is the whole building that all the classes take place in. Rightly approached, all the topics you’ll study and focus on as a believer will be offered to you ‘within the walls’ of the glorious Gospel ... What I hope you see is that the cross centered life isn’t just one option among many that God offers. It is the life that every Christian is called to.”*

C.J. Mahaney, The Cross Centered Life, pg. 75, 82

- Let’s take a look at what living the Gospel-centered life looks like for ...

- 1- The individual Christian
- 2- The local Church
- 3- Our mission to the World

## ... For the Individual Christian

### *A Joyful Sense of Need*

- Having found the power of God unto salvation in the Gospel and one’s soul at peace with God, we still have the daily battles of living in this fleshly body with the material world all around urging us to find pleasure in something other than Christ. Embracing Christ in the Gospel doesn’t eradicate the lusts of the flesh, in fact quite the opposite it highlights the real opposition the child of God faces in a world trying to squeeze him into its mold. The climax of the Gospel story for the Christ follower is when he falls on his face desperately undone by his own devices, crying out for a Savior who alone can do what he has no hope of ever doing on his own. It is at that moment of brokenness that we see the power of the Gospel to rescue the one who now sees so clearly his need of rescue.

*1- A Joyful Sense of Need*

*“We can’t begin to appreciate the good news of the gospel until we see our deep need. Most people, even people who have already become believers, have never given much thought to how desperate our condition is outside of Christ. Few people ever think about the dreadful implications of being under the wrath of God. And most of all, none of us even begin to realize how truly sinful we are.”*

Jerry Bridges, The Gospel For Real Life

- It is at the moment we realize from what we’ve been rescued that healing occurs and restoration takes place. And as the believer gets up off his knees to march forward in joyful service to his new master, he must never forget the desperate state from which he has come. Not only must he never forget that, but must push forward daily in turning from self and his own futile attempts at pleasing God by his good works. Being buoyed up by the power of the Gospel and kept low by the cost of the cross are inseparable.

*“So admit you’re the worst sinner you know. Admit you’re unworthy and deserve to be condemned. But don’t stop there! Move on to rejoicing in the Savior who came to save the worst of sinners ... and kneel down in worship at the feet of Him who bore your sins.”*

C.J. Mahaney, The Cross Centered Life.

♥ We are daily in need of the grace of God to do anything at all that honors the Lord. The Gospel-drenched believer never moves far from the foot of a bloody cross, and never hesitates to admit his need of it every day.

### *A True Identity*

- A believer’s day-to-day acceptance with the Father is not based on what he does for God, but what Christ did for him. Personal performance takes the Gospel and sets it aside in exchange for works righteousness, works sanctification. Being “in Christ” is far more than some doctrinal distinction, it unites me forever with the person and work of Jesus on the cross. It makes his sacrifice mine. It makes his acceptance before the Father mine. It makes my life not my own, but His. When the believer finds this kind of Gospel identification for himself, he really finds the rest God gives in the Gospel - rest from all the striving to be accepted, loved, and free. Far too many believers work

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far too hard at trying to please God and never enter into the rest God finds pleasure in lavishing on His children. A child who grows up with a strong sense of family identity is able to securely move outside the home and courageously attempt new things because the acceptance and safety they find at home. So too, the child of God who has embraced who they are in Christ is able to move past their personal struggles and engage a world that needs Christ because they are resting safely in the unchanging acceptance they have from the Father through the Son.

♥ Gospel identity isn't about feeling good about yourself or a means of gaining a better self-esteem. Gospel identity is one powerful motivation for stepping out in faith to see your Father do great things in and through you. Your secure place in the Gospel compels obedience in loving and serving those who need what you have.

### *A Great Power for Change*

- Paul describes the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation. For without the Gospel, sin's dominion is never broken, and nobody is ever saved. And yet the Gospel is not only powerful to crack the hard heart, but to sanctify the soft one. We sell the Gospel short if we think that the grace of the Gospel is only needed in justification and not sanctification. The churches in Galatia had embraced the work of the Gospel through the Spirit to give them new life, but had forsaken that same Gospel grace in their spiritual growth. Paul rebuked them sternly for seeing their personal efforts as more powerful than the work of the Spirit in their sanctification and service.

*Galatians 3:1-3 – “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”*

♥ The Gospel doesn't take away the responsibility of the believer to work hard at growth, but it makes it doable. Why? Because the Gospel is the basis for joy (Philippians 4:4-7); in the Gospel, sin has been triumphed over (1 Corinthians 15:56-58); the Gospel empowers your discipline and obedience (Philippians 2:12-13); and in the Gospel, God supplies the strength for service (1 Peter 4:10-11). My friends do not neglect the power of the Gospel in

Notes:

3- A Great Power for Change

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your best efforts at spiritual growth; nothing will frustrate you more and drive you into despair.

### ***An Honest Reality***

- Make no mistake, life after the Gospel is full of pain. Some who follow Christ will face increased pain and persecution. For others the reality of living in a fallen world becomes all the more real. The Gospel brings health and wealth, but not the kind that comes with an earthly guarantee. And yet, when the child of God lavishes in the spiritual health that has been restored, and the undefiled inheritance kept in heaven for him, his perspective changes over the hurt and pain of this present world.

♥ Rather than working so hard to avoid trials and insulate myself from them, I can embrace them and position myself to benefit from them. The Gospel opens my eyes to see with faith that even the bad news has good news at the end. Far from trite platitudes of Christian superficiality, the Gospel allows me to grieve as a human and rejoice over the glories of heaven. When others hurt me and relationships fail me, the Gospel points me to a radical love that reached out to me when I was an enemy of God. When personal needs overwhelm me and it feels as if I'll sink under the weight of pressure, the Gospel which has given me everything for life and godliness free me up to give and be a blessing to others. The Gospel doesn't just change our attitude toward reality; it changes our reality that determines our attitude. The believer finds perspective not just that his future is secure, but that his present circumstances are never outside the watchful eye of His loving God.

### **... For the Local Church**

#### ***A Confidence in the Scriptures***

- When you understand the plan of God in the Gospel that is unstoppable and will triumph, you flee from man's ideas and opinions and trust in the authority of the Scriptures. The Word of God stands as the absolute truth giving absolute direction for the Church and for every local church. This confidence produces not a harsh dogmatism, but thoughtful conviction that isn't tossed by every new idea and the latest techniques.

*Notes:*

*4- An Honest Reality*

*1- A Confidence in the Scriptures*

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♥ This kind of confidence in the Word provides a freedom to approach ministry without manipulation or guilt, as God is the one who does the work to change lives and grow the church, not wise leaders or successful programs.

- We believe in the expositional preaching of the Word of God.
- We believe in grace-motivated obedience coming from the Word of God.
- We believe in the growth and results that come from the sovereign hand of an almighty God.

### ***A Love for People, not Buildings and Programs***

- If the story of the Gospel is about God getting glory through the redemption of mankind, then people are what matter most to God as he puts Himself on display to the world. If people matter most to God, they should matter most to the church. The effectiveness of a local church should never be measured by bucks, building, and bodies, but by the transformational nature of its people in the world.

- Our identity as a community of faith is defined by the work of Jesus over us, therefore we are not the issue nor place of boasting, but God's sanctifying work in and through us. This pushes us away from following charismatic leaders and persuasive speakers to humbly walking together as worshippers of the Chief Shepherd as he leads us on in mission.

♥ Loving one another becomes a fundamental piece of Gospel existence because He first loved us. We are freed from judging each other based on externals, freed from selecting leaders based on worldly standards, and freed up to genuinely consider one another as more important than ourselves.

- We believe every person is created in the image of God and valuable before God.
- We believe relationships should reflect humility, honesty, and selflessness as people loved by God.
- We believe genuine transformation resulting in worship is the measure of God's work, not corporate progress nor the outward show of spirituality.

*Notes:*

*2- A Love for People, not Building and Programs*

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## *A Courageous Commitment to Mission*

- God is a missionary God, having taken the initiative to send His Son to seek and save the lost. Time and time again God is pictured as the patient and longsuffering Father who wants sick people healed, lost people found, and the unloved people loved.

*Matthew 18:12-13 – “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.”*

*Luke 15:24 – “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to celebrate.”*

*Luke 19:10 – “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

♥ Gospel ministry always positions the local church to be looking outward, not inward. Her mission is not to make those inside warm and comfortable, but to go to those on the outside who have yet to experience the loving forgiveness of a gracious Savior.

- We believe the health of our church community is for the effectiveness of our ministry to the unbelieving community.
- We believe the church is to be the redemptive influence on culture.
- We believe every regenerate member of the church is on mission for the Gospel as part of normal Christian living.

## **... For Our Mission to the World**

- When we have fallen in love with the Gospel story as the treasure worth selling everything we have to purchase, our “outreach” then becomes a ministry of delighting in Christ in front of a watching world. We commend the Gospel to others from a heart that cherishes it above all else. This is a genuine and beautifully attractive witness to the world of a glorious God. We are not salesmen peddling a cheap message; we are lovers inviting others to behold that which is supremely beautiful!

Notes:

3- A Courageous Commitment to Mission

*"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man."*

John Piper, [Let the Nations Be](#)

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- Filled with such love, armed with such truth, we then become agents of hope in God's great rescue plan for the fallen race.

### ***We See the World as People to be Loved, not Prizes to be Won***

- Trusting God to accomplish *His* purposes through *His* story in *His* Word, we can freely move into people's lives in authentic ways. We don't need "cute" evangelistic techniques; we don't need "canned" presentations; we simply need a motivation to see God's glory displayed through our love for other human beings. We approach others not to critique, judge, or coerce because we know from what we've been rescued and of the One who rescued us. For as different as people might be, our common ground is the reality of human suffering brought on through sin. Any attempt to belittle others pain, judge their sinful choices, or place ourselves over them is to miss the heart of what God has accomplished in our own lives (perhaps an indicator that He hasn't yet accomplished it L).

♥ Evangelism is not a program of the church, it is not something we will guilt you into or make forceful appeals to go knock on doors. But you do have relationships – neighbors, co-workers, family members, acquaintances in the community, and Gospel living longs to make Christ known to those in your world who are outside of the love of Jesus. Our recipe for mission: confidence in the Gospel, courage to move into people's lives with love ... and conversations. That's right, conversations! Having coffee with people, inviting people into your home, caring about who people are and the things going on in their lives that just may be the entrance for you to introduce them to the God who is there and who cares.

- We believe it is counter-productive to speak the glorious truths of God with an unloving spirit, to force yourself upon others, or to dismiss those who disagree with you.
- We believe God is the one who saves sinners.
- We believe a winsome and humble spirit to serve others coupled with a deep delight in the Gospel is the greatest approach to living the mission of Christ out in the world.

*Notes:*

*1- We See the World as People to be Loved, not Prizes to be Won*

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## ***We Care about Justice and the Whole Person***

- God created whole people, not walking spirits or mindless physical bodies, therefore our ministry must be to the whole person. What does that mean? That means that we care about the things God cares about in the world.

***James 1:27 – “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”***

- The conservative church for too long has focused on the back-end of that verse (keep oneself unstained from the world) to the neglect of the front-end of the verse. The Gospel cares about those who can't care for themselves, not just trying to “get people saved.”
- Where people are hurting, the Gospel has something to say. Where disease is winning, the Gospel provides a fight. Where relationships are disintegrating, the Gospel invades with healing balm.

***James 1:22 – “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”***

♥ God's story invaded a dirty world. His Son left the glory of heaven to dwell among dirty people; our Gospel living must take the same track. To only speak a good game is to lose. We must take the Gospel and live it out in practical ways with real people to the glory of God.

- We believe Gospel ministry must be more than “sharing the Gospel” but sharing life as well.
- We believe Gospel ministry will be accompanied with compassion, justice, and the heart of God.
- We believe Gospel ministry is responsibly giving a cup of cold water to those in need.

## ***We are Strangers here with Resolve for the Day***

- Each day is a gift from God to be used for the building of His Kingdom. We are not our own, our life was bought with a price and is to be used for the glory of the one who rescued us. Our home is heaven and the days we have here on earth are not to be wasted, but redeemed for the mission of the King.

Notes:

2- *We Care about Justice and the Whole Person*

3- *We are Strangers here with Resolve for the Day*

*Ephesians 5:15-16 – “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”*

- Making the best use of the time does not involve busyness and burnout, it involves resting in the Gospel and living purposefully. We go drastically wrong here to preach a message of “Go Do It” without remembering everything we’ve said up to this point in the class. The Gospel is not about our best efforts, but Jesus’ finished work. The Gospel is not about our clever achievements, but Christ’s one achievement. So, we rest in the Gospel, enjoying the beauty of the day, our families, His good gifts ... and we know that the Church is the only hope for the world.

♥ We must always live enjoying His gifts and fighting to not make them gods. When we turn His gifts to us into gods, we have made this world our home and heaven a fairy-tale. Your mission and purpose for existence is to glorify God by enjoying Him and making Him known to others through that enjoyment. Go ... Enjoy boldly!

\* Gospel Class Project for Membership:

Prepare your Story (testimony of conversion) using the outline of the Gospel presented in this class. Remember the Gospel is about God, not you, so as you speak of what God has done in your life to rescue you from sin do your best to make clear the five chapters of the Gospel so that someone listening could clearly understand the Story of God in Your Story. Do your best to keep this to one page. You will be sharing this with an Elder as you apply for Membership at Leroy Community Chapel. Thanks.