REFERENCE NOTES ON THE DVD STUDY SERIES

GOSPEL IN LIFE

Prepared for the More than Conquerors (MTC) fellowship at Scarborough Community Alliance Church, 2011

These brief notes are not intended as a full summary of everything taught. They are meant as a compliment reference to the video which includes important text that appears on the screen and information that is not included in the study guide.

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Visit the official website at www.gospelinlife.com for information about the study series.

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There were three options presented to the Israelites regarding how they should handle moving to a pagan city in Jeremiah 29:4-14:

1. Move into the city and lose your spiritual identity (so said the Babylonians)
2. Don’t move into the city and keep your spiritual identity (so said the false prophets)
3. Move into the city and keep your spiritual identity (so says God!)

In other words, God advises them to serve and love their new place of residence retaining their unique spiritual identity, rather than resemble the city or remove themselves from it.

Why cities?

Cities were created to be places of refuge and safety, justice, culture development, and spiritual seeking and finding.

However, all of these purposes have been corrupted by sin. In actuality, today cities are places of racism, classism, and violence; escape from God and His law; pride, arrogance, excess, overwork, and exhaustion; cults and false belief.

But we can work together to redeem cities:

“Are you living for the city? Or just using it for fun or career advancement?”
Three ways to live:

1. **Irreligious way** to “be your own savior”
   - Living as you want without God & disregarding God's laws
2. **Religious way** to “be your own savior”
   - Working hard to be good and obeying God’s moral laws
   - A person living this way feels that God “owes” you salvation
3. **Third way (the gospel)** looking to God for your salvation

Even if you can explain God’s way, even if you know all the definitions, your heart may not believe it. On a practical level, we may say to ourselves, “IF I'm good enough ...”

In other words:

1. **Irreligion is**: “I don’t have to obey anyone but myself.”
2. **Religion is**: “I obey, therefore I am accepted by God.”
3. **The gospel is**: “I’m accepted by God at infinite cost to Jesus Christ, therefore I obey.”

The Parable of the Prodigal Son(s) – Luke 15:11-32

We identify sin with the younger son (v13) but not as much with the older son. However, through his actions the older son reveals he is “just like the younger son.” In essence, the older son says (v29-30) “You owe me!” That’s the religious way, not the gospel way.

**Younger son**: Self-discovery and self-indulgence (ie, 1. Irreligious way)

**Older son**: Moral conformity and moral performance (ie, 2. Religious way)

But they both wanted the father’s things, not the father! (God’s things, not God)

Each had a strategy to try to get things: One was trying to be really really bad (self-indulgent) the other was trying to be really really good, but they both were merely different forms of self-justification.
The Third Way to Live

The Prodigal Son(s) parable shows **how God avails the third way** (ie, 3. The gospel) to us:

- We need the initiating love of the father
  - The father needs to come to us and show us we need to be saved by grace

- We need to learn to repent: Not only for the bad things we do, but also often we need to repent of the reason we do good things
  - What keeps the older son from the father’s feast of salvation is his *pride*: It’s his love of his own righteousness. When we have an attitude like that we need to repent of it.

- We need to see what it cost God to bring us home
  - The father can’t bring the younger son home without a cost
  - A good older brother would have rejoiced (ex, Jesus’ previous parables re sheeps & coins) but he did not
  - However, we have a good older brother: Jesus Christ

“We will never stop being either younger brothers or elder brothers in our hearts until we are moved to the depths by what it cost our true elder brother Jesus Christ to bring us home.” Tim Keller

**The gospel is not:** Morality/immorality  Religion/irreligion  Something in-between

**The gospel is:** The third way:

"I’m accepted by God at infinite cost to Jesus Christ, therefore I obey.”
What is an idol?

“An idol is anything which is more fundamental than God to your happiness, meaning in life, or identity.”

These idols can be bad things or good things. When we make anything other than God our ultimate, “We’ve worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator.”

In psychological terms: An idol is the thing you get your identity from.

In theological terms: An idol is the thing you’re turning to for your righteousness.

How do you know what your idols are? Ask the question “What is my worst nightmare? What thing, if it were absent, would take away my desire to live?” Whatever that is, that is your idol. If we lose that thing, it will devastate us if we allow it to become our ultimate instead of God.

What’s so bad about idolatry?
It signals a much deeper issue: “Under every act of idolatry is a disbelief in the gospel.”
It hinders our spiritual growth: “Your life will never change because your heart hasn’t changed.”

How do we give up our idols?

1. Repent: Put those things to death (recognizing and leaving behind the idols)
2. Rejoice: Set your mind on things above instead (what we have, who we are in Jesus)

Jesus must be our “overriding passion” which informs all supersedes aspects of life.
What defines Christian community? (based on 1 Peter 2:9)

“holiness” – Set apart, distinct, different. A new society where everyone can see what the world can be like under the kingship of Jesus Christ.

“royal priesthood” – Priests are mediators, they speak to God on behalf of the people. We all have this role, deeply involved in people’s lives to bring them to God.

So we are called to be both different & distinct from the world, yet deeply involved in the lives of the people living in the world.

“We ourselves are the dwelling of God … we are called as a community to respond to the glory of God in absolutely every area of our lives.”

Why is community so important?

- **You cannot know God apart from community.**
  God summons you into relationship with Himself, and also into a community of people; a “new humanity.” Merely sitting in pews on Sunday is just loitering in a crowd.

- **You cannot change deeply apart from community.**
  The gospel changes all our relationships. Gospel shaped people form deep community, and yet only in community can we become greater gospel shaped people.

- **You cannot win the world apart from community.**
  The Christian community itself declares and communicates the nature & power of the gospel. Ex, Makes money, sex, and power life-giving things, not ends unto themselves.
How does Jesus rule over this present age and the future age?

Present age: When everything falls apart, spiritually and emotionally, socially and physically. It began after the fall of humankind in Genesis 3.

Future age: When all of the alienation we experience in the present age is wiped away and even the totality of the natural world is redeemed and restored.

When Jesus came to Earth, he brought power of the future age into the present! In a sense we live “in-between the ages,” during the time when the Kingdom is in a sense already here but in another sense is not yet fully realized.

How can we live so others experience this age to come?

The church’s responsibility is to be a “city on a hill” (or “town built on a hill,” Matthew 5:14). We should model the age to come as much as possible.

The church needs to present an alternate way to do everything in a way different from and winsome to the world.

- An alternate city is gospel-speaking.
  We talk about many things that are important to us, but not Jesus, not the gospel. How will we do that? Are you ready to "give an answer for the hope you have"?

- An alternate city is neighbor-loving.
  Jesus always embraced spiritual outsiders. How do you greet your neighbors to bring peace to your neighbors? How do you bring healing to your community?

- An alternate city is community-transformed.
  Jesus sent us into the world primarily to be sanctified to present a credible message to the world through our transformed lives, not to be articulate and eloquent.

We need gospel-speaking, neighbor-loving, community-transformed communities.

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”
Romans 12:2
"The Bible is a single true story with teachings sprinkled through to illustrate the story."

What does work have to do with God’s story?

The single true story of the Bible is **God’s story, and His plan for humanity**. The story breaks into history through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and continues in the people of God, filled with the Holy Spirit. The Christian is part of God’s story.

The Kingdom of God, already here but not yet fully realized, will one day be fully revealed. **The gospel is the means by which His Kingdom of God is advancing.** It should influence everything we do: This is primarily through our work. **Therefore, you need to bring the gospel into your work.** (And school, volunteering, homemaking, etc.)

“Do we allow the gospel to shape our day-to-day work, and in turn become shaped by it?”

How does the gospel change our perspective on work?

1) **The gospel changes the motivation for our work.** You are working for God, not for people, money, or personal success. Your identity is founded in God, not in work. This is the central principle for rest, aka Sabbath.

2) **The gospel changes the ethics of our work.** Each type of workplace presents unique ethical challenges and temptations. Discuss with other Christians in the field how to respond biblically and winsomely to such challenges.

3) **The gospel changes our conception of our work.** Your work has dignity, regardless of what it is, because you are working with His creation.

How can I live out the gospel in my work?

Ask: **How can I, in my workplace, do my work in such a way that allows other people to flourish,** physically, relationally, socially, psychologically, and spiritually?

“Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.” 1 Corinthians 10:24
"Justice is love in action. It's bringing shalom."

What does “shalom” mean?

**Shalom:** Total flourishing in absolutely every dimension: physically, relationally, socially, and spiritually. In other words, the way things ought to be.

**Fabric analogy:** A fabric is interwoven in such a way that it is both beautiful and strong. This is how the church—and our society—should be: Shalom, everything working together.

Wherever we see breakdown of relationship, whether it's unhappiness, or social degeneration, or hunger & poverty, we are to invest our time, money, and ourselves to lovingly restore shalom.

"*Plunge into those places to reweave the broken fabric of creation with the gifts of the Spirit and the resources of the gospel.*"

What does this mean practically?

**Your neighbor is anyone in need.** (Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37)

*Ex: Changing social structure, fighting for fair wages, advocating against domestic violence.*

**When we refuse to love the "least of people," we refuse to love Jesus.** (The Sheep and the Goats, Matthew 25:31-46)

Jesus plunged Himself into the world in order to save us, and took on poverty and injustice for our sakes. He self-identified with the poor and oppressed.

If you have begun to experience the inner shalom of knowing God the Father through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, then resolve to have that shalom felt everywhere.

"*He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*" Micah 6:8

Note: Doing good deeds does not save anyone; that would be the false "religious" way, not the gospel way! But as Keller says, "*A strong social conscience, and a life poured out in deeds of service to others, especially the poor, is the inevitable sign of a real relationship with God, of real faith.*" See Eph 2:8-10 re grace & good works.
GOSPEL IN LIFE

Session 8, Eternity: The World that Is to Come
Notes based on Tim Keller’s presentation, focusing on Isaiah 60 & Revelation 22

"In the eternal city, God's life-giving, intimacy-bringing, joy-creating presence will be the very air we breathe."

God reveals the New Jerusalem in the books of Isaiah and Revelation. In this city we find the tree of life. This city will be what Eden was supposed to be: paradise fulfilled. Adam was supposed to build it, but it took the perfect second Adam, Jesus Christ, to succeed.

A Vision of Renewed Culture
In this new city, even the cultural products and goods of "pagan" nations will be brought inside. They are transformed and incorporated into the new heavens and earth. Our work (art, architecture, literature, etc) won’t be destroyed; it will be transformed.

A Vision of Restored Shalom
Human beings and human relationships will be completely healed. Community is renewed. Diverse cultures won’t be lost; they’ll be integrated perfectly into new community.

A Vision of Remarkable Spiritual Intimacy
The new city needs no sun, moon, or lampposts. This is because God's intimate presence will be the only light required. God's glory (previously hidden from us, for it would’ve killed us to behold it) is revealed!

A World Completely Restored

- Instead of alienation from God, we have true intimacy.
- Instead of alienation from each other, we have true community.
- Instead of alienation from the world, we have true culture.

The gospel changes the heart, community, and the world. We live in the moment, but look forward to eternity.

"This is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But, for them, it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world ... had only been the cover, and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on Earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before." C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle