

The Gospel and Scripture: How to Read the Bible

Mike Bullmore

The Gospel Coalition Booklets

Edited by **D. A. Carson & Timothy Keller**

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Christians intuitively agree that there is a necessary and deeply interpenetrating relationship between Scripture and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The exact nature of that relationship is a more challenging matter. While many lines of connection could be (and have been) productively explored, this chapter suggests and unpacks two particular connections between Scripture and the gospel: the gospel is a *cause* of scriptural revelation, and the gospel is an *effect* of scriptural revelation. In other words, God's great, eternal purpose of redemption (what is expressed in the gospel) gives rise to the Bible, and the Bible serves to accomplish God's purpose in the gospel.

The Gospel as Both Cause and Effect of Scriptural Revelation

Cause

If we think of the gospel, broadly speaking, as God's eternal good purpose to redeem a people for himself (1 Pet. 2:9) and to restore his fallen creation (Rom. 8:19–21), then this “good news” precedes and gives rise to biblical revelation. All of Scripture is marked by this sense of being born out of some great divine initiative. In this sense, the gospel is a cause of biblical revelation. While Scripture itself is not the gospel, all Scripture is related to the gospel, and the gospel is Scripture's reason for being. The gospel is the Bible's main and unifying message.

God's purposes in revelation can never be separated from his purposes in redemption. In eternity past God planned to redeem a people for himself:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according

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to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Eph. 1:3–6)

God's plan lies behind and brings into being his spoken communication to humans, which is preserved in Scripture.

Inherent in the idea of revelation is the idea of intention. God means to accomplish something by revealing himself:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa. 55:10–11)

God sends his word to accomplish his eternal purpose to redeem a people for himself, and God speaks through Isaiah of gathering a people to himself:

Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.
Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.
Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know,
and a nation that did not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you. (Isa. 55:3–5)

The New Testament frequently spells out this purpose of revelation with great clarity. Paul writes of the Old Testament, "Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). Hope of what? Hope of the full redemption that the completion of God's good purposes will bring about (cf. Rom. 8:18–25). This, says Paul, is why God wrote the Scriptures. Scripture is essential to reveal God's redeeming purpose and activity. In this sense,

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the gospel is the cause of Scripture. But the gospel, in at least one crucial sense, is also an effect of biblical revelation.

Effect

We speak of the gospel in the sense of its effective proclamation. In this sense revelation necessarily precedes the gospel, and the gospel flows effectively from scriptural revelation. The gospel is the Bible's main message, and preaching the content of the Bible—that is, the prophetic anticipation of God's redemptive purpose in Christ from the Old Testament and the apostolic witness to the accomplished work of Christ in the New Testament—unleashes the power of the gospel message and achieves its God-ordained end.

Paul captures this so compellingly in Romans 10. Speaking of God's purpose to redeem a people for himself, he writes:

There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? . . . And how are they to hear to hear without someone preaching? (Rom. 10:12–14)

A few verses later, Paul makes this summarizing statement: “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (v. 17). In other words, Scripture faithfully proclaimed accomplishes God's good purpose to redeem.

Peter makes the same point: “You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God. . . . And this word is the good news that was preached to you” (1 Pet. 1:23–25). John echoes this theme when he says that he wrote his Gospel “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” (John 20:31). This is simply another way of saying that biblical revelation exists to accomplish God's great purpose to redeem a people for himself in Christ.

So the Bible exists both *because of* and *for* the gospel. The key is that the gospel is the message of Christ. The Bible in all its parts points to and explains Christ in some way. Therefore, the Bible in all its parts contributes not only to our understanding the gospel but to our “hear-

ing” the gospel with the goal that we might believe and that God will fully accomplish his good purpose of redemption. This then requires that we appropriate Scripture in keeping with God’s good purpose.

Foundational Convictions Necessary for a Right Reading of Scripture

If the Bible is going to exercise the particular effectiveness that God intends, certain foundational convictions need to be in place and functioning.

Scripture Is God-Breathed

Paul reminds his dear son in the faith, “All Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Tim. 3:16). Paul is saying that Scripture originates in the mind of God and is spoken out (“breathed out”) from that mind. That God really spoke Scripture is a conviction that Christians must hold deeply so that their lives are shaped by it. When we use the phrase “God’s Word” to refer to our Bibles, we shouldn’t miss what that term communicates. God has spoken something objective. There is something specific *he* is saying. He is speaking. He is communicating. God has really spoken, and the Scripture is that word in written form.

The primary implication of this conviction is that the Bible is trustworthy and true. “Every word of God proves true” (Prov. 30:5). Holding to this conviction will profoundly impact both our personal reading of the Bible and our response to it. It will set us free from always questioning and wondering. Conversely, if we do not hold this conviction, we will find ourselves second-guessing, double-minded, and unstable when we face difficulties in life or in the Bible.

Scripture Is Understandable

Paul tells Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). There is such a thing as rightly handling God’s Word. In other words, not only has God said something objective and specific, but he also means for us to get it. God is not some cruel deity toying with us in revelation. He did not say something that he knows we will never understand, like some uncrackable code. He did not give us a communication designed to frustrate. No, he spoke for a purpose. The very concept of *revelation* indicates an intention to

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make known. God is accomplishing a greatly desired end, so he means for us to understand what he has said.

We do need to remember, however, the early part of 2 Timothy 2:15. Paul tells Timothy that he must do his best and be a worker. Nobody drifts into understanding. But we need to hold deeply to the conviction that Scripture will yield to believing study. God means for us to understand what he has spoken.

Scripture Is Useful

God's people live and flourish only by believing and obeying his Word. It is uniquely useful and profitable. Scripture is useful not by some mystical operation but through the very ordinary means of teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). By these means the Bible shows itself very profitable.

Scripture Is Effective

Scripture claims to be useful, but what does it actually accomplish?" Consider again the words of Isaiah:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa. 55:10–11)

Add to those words these from Hebrews: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). When the writer of Hebrews speaks of the Word of God as "active," he is speaking of its efficacy, that is, its ability to accomplish its purpose, and he says it does so with penetrating ability.

Consider some of the very specific things God's Word claims to do:

- 1) It initiates faith: "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

- 2) It gives new spiritual life: “You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Pet. 1:23).
- 3) It helps us grow spiritually: “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2).
- 4) It sanctifies: “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17).
- 5) It searches the heart and convicts: “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).
- 6) It liberates: “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31–32).
- 7) It refreshes and renews: “Give me life according to your word!” (Ps. 119:25).
- 8) It revives and enlightens: “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Ps. 19:7; see also vv. 8–11).

This is only a representative sample of what the Word says it can do. Is it any wonder that David says, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked . . . but his delight is in the law of the LORD” (Ps. 1:1–2)? Such a person will be “like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither” (v. 3). Simply put, God intends to nurture his people by his Word. Scripture is the primary means through which God feeds us, nourishes us, causes us to flourish, and intends to accomplish his good purpose.

If these four convictions are present and operating in a Christian’s life, then that Christian will anticipate and expect God’s transforming grace in the gospel mediated through his Word. But another characteristic is absolutely essential.

A Necessary Posture of Heart: Humility

In order for us to appropriate Scripture as God intends, we must actively, eagerly, and willingly place ourselves under its authority. Too often, because we like to think highly of ourselves, we are tempted to place ourselves over the Word as judges or critics.

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I've heard the story of a man who was in Paris visiting the Louvre. He was particularly interested in seeing Leonardo Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. After examining the painting for some time with a critical eye, he announced, "I don't like it." The guard stationed there replied, "Sir, these paintings are no longer being judged. The viewers are." It is the same with God's Word, which is not what is being judged. Its readers are. The question is whether the hearts of readers are humbly postured to submit to the absolute authority of God through his Word.

Part of submitting to the authority of Scripture is being willing to place ourselves under the scrutiny of Scripture. We ought to be in the habit of regularly examining our hearts. But this examination must not take place independently or in a vacuum. It must be done very consciously under God's Word. God declares, "I the LORD search the heart" (Jer. 17:10). In response to this, our prayer should echo that of David's: "Search me, O God, and know my heart!" (Ps. 139:23).

Hebrews reminds us that it is with his Word that God discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12). We ought to regularly and seriously place ourselves under the scrutiny of Scripture with the purpose of changing in light of what Scripture reveals. And this purpose should not be merely a duty; we should joyfully anticipate its being the very means by which God accomplishes his redemptive purposes in our lives.

Too often, when confronted by God's Word, we have a ready explanation for why it doesn't apply to us, and in the process we have talked ourselves out of the very thing that God intends for our good. We would do well to attend to the words of Thomas Watson, a seventeenth-century Puritan pastor:

Take every word as spoken to yourselves. When the word thunders against sin, think thus: "God means my sins"; when it presseth any duty, "God intends me in this." Many put off Scripture from themselves, as if it only concerned those who lived in the time when it was written; but if you intend to profit by the word, bring it home to yourselves: a medicine will do no good, unless it be applied.¹

Humility is absolutely necessary—an active, eager, humble, even joyful anticipation of God's Word working its purpose in our lives.

An Indispensible Hermeneutic

With these foundational convictions and this necessary posture of heart in place, we come now to the matter of interpreting Scripture. The New Testament sets forth two key principles.

Christ-Centeredness

There is probably no passage of Scripture more compelling regarding the Christ-centeredness of Scripture than Luke 24. Jesus is engaged incognito in a conversation with two of his disciples as they are walking on their way to Emmaus. They have just summarized for him the happenings of the last days during which, they say, Jesus, in whom they had put their hope, had been killed, and three days later there were unconfirmed reports of his resurrection. In response Jesus says, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” Then Luke tells us, “And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).

Later in that same chapter Jesus speaks to the gathered Twelve and says, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Once again Luke adds, “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). What is clear from this passage is that Jesus understood the entire Old Testament as speaking in some real way of him.

Jesus communicates much the same thing in John 5. Speaking to the religious leaders in Jerusalem, he says, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me” (v. 39). Again Jesus understands the Old Testament to speak of and point to him.

It is self-evident that the New Testament is about Christ. The apostolic authors are extremely careful that their readers not abstract any part of their writings from the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Bible is *all* about Jesus in some specific and God-intended way. In his very helpful book *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Bryan Chapell summarizes the point well: “Every [scriptural] text is predictive of the work of Christ, preparatory for the work of Christ, reflective of the work of Christ, and/or resultant of the work of Christ.”² This, of course, means

that if we are going to read the Bible rightly, we must see it in all its parts as it relates to Christ.

However, we are not called to import some artificial connection to Jesus whenever we read or teach a passage of Scripture. The opposite is true. We are called to understand and exposit the specific ways in which passages point to Christ, but Jesus' words presuppose that every passage does indeed point to him. For our reading of the Bible to be gospel-centered, as it should be, it must always look to and focus on Jesus, and it is just as possible to fail to do this when handling the New Testament as it is when handling the Old Testament.

Spiritual Interpretation

It is not sufficient merely to recognize that Christ-centeredness is essential for rightly interpreting Scripture. Our handling of Scripture must be accompanied by the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is qualitatively different from every other book and requires that we read it in keeping with its nature.

Paul speaks to this in his first letter to the Corinthians. Having just described his recent ministry of “proclaiming to [them] the testimony of God” (1 Cor. 2:1) and reminding them that his preaching to them was not a matter of human wisdom but of the power of God (vv. 4–5), he says:

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given

us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:6–14)

Four things clearly emerge from this passage in 1 Corinthians 2. First, there is a wisdom from God that he has revealed to humans (vv. 10, 12). Second, that revealing is done through the Spirit (v. 10). Third, since the revealing is done through the Spirit, it requires that the Spirit interpret it (v. 13). Fourth, God has given the Spirit to believers so “that we might understand the things freely given us by God” (v. 12). This applies both to those teaching (v. 12) and to those hearing (vv. 13–14). We cannot rightly understand the Word of God apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. It is he who gives people the ability to know that Scripture is true and to understand its truth.

Two Ways to Read the Bible

We come now to the actual practice of reading God’s Word. We are speaking here not of the skill of publicly reading Scripture but of personally appropriating it, whether in private study or in exercising discernment when others teach the Bible. What does a “right handling of the word of truth” look like (2 Tim. 2:15)?

The Bible is endlessly interesting because it is God’s story, and God by nature is himself endlessly interesting. The Bible is an ever-flowing fountain. The more you read it, the more you find its truth and beauty to be inexhaustible.

There are actually many methods of reading the Bible, and because the Bible is inexhaustible, many methods can prove fruitful. However, we are not so much concerned here with what might be called “methods” as we are with what we can call “approaches.” Two main approaches to the Bible usefully unlock its treasure, which is the gospel.

Reading the Bible as Continuous Narrative (or History)

The Bible is a historical account. It is firmly anchored in real space-time history with regular and very intentional references to known historical figures, events, and locations (e.g., Luke 3:1–3). Without question the Bible reliably recounts the historical events it presents.

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One could think of reading the Bible from a historical perspective as reading “along” the biblical narrative. The Bible compiles many writings by many different authors, and this can challenge readers who are trying to relate to all the parts of this history.

But the Bible is more than a narrative, recounting human history. There is a larger story behind the story. The real biblical narrative is the unfolding of God’s purpose and plan. The Bible is God’s story, and its storyline is the gospel: God’s plan to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation through Christ.

Reading the Bible as a Compendium of God-Inspired Perspectives (or Theology)

The Bible not only recounts history; it also interprets history. Scripture comes to us in the forms of declarations, laws, promises, proverbs, summons, and the like, but every part is a God-inspired perspective. We could think of reading the Bible from a theological perspective as reading “across” the Scriptures. Approaching Scripture along this line, we gather these perspectives into categories of thought and arrive at a coherent understanding of what the Bible is saying cumulatively. This way of reading necessarily gives more attention to the contours of individual books and passages, but it is wise to remember that the meaning of any Scripture text is related to the meaning of all other texts, given that they are all part of one unified word from God.

The Singular Message of the Bible

Whichever of these two ways the Bible is read, its message is the same. If read as a continuous narrative, its storyline is creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. If read as a collection of theological perspectives, the themes that emerge are God, sin, Christ, and faith. The message of both readings is the triumph of God’s eternal, redemptive purpose. These two ways of reading the Bible are not at all contradictory. On the contrary, they are both necessary to fully understand and “hear” the biblical gospel and to help us see how all the parts of the Bible hold together and point us to Jesus.

An Illustration from Matthew 12

We can briefly illustrate how these two approaches are complementary by applying them to a particular passage of Scripture:

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." (Matt. 12:1-8)

Reading this passage from a narrative approach focuses on how the incident with David and his cohorts in 1 Samuel 21 foreshadows Christ. What precisely is the connection that Jesus is making between the present situation and the story about David? Did this incident in David's life happen on the Sabbath? We simply don't know what day David entered the house of God. If that is why Jesus referenced this incident, it seems he would have mentioned that correspondence, but he did not.

So what's the connection? Is Jesus saying, "Hey, if it was okay to break the law once, it's okay to break it again"? We can confidently say that is not the connection based on Jesus' earlier words about his commitment to the Law (cf. Matt. 5:17).

Jesus indicates that they are not breaking the law; they are "guiltless." The connection is not in the when or the what of the story. The connection is in the who of the story, and attention to the narrative flow of Scripture is what enables us to see that. Only the priests were to eat the bread of the Presence unless, of course, someone with greater authority than the priests came—someone who had already been anointed as king and had authority over the law.

Is Jesus, by recounting this bit of Old Testament history, suggesting that someone as great as, or perhaps even greater, than David was present and that the Pharisees should have, like Ahimelech back in 1 Samuel 21, recognized that greater authority? That truth, implicit in verses 3 and 4, is made explicit in the following verses when Jesus announces his superiority over both priest and temple. It all boils down to who Jesus is, and it is the narrative line proceeding from

David that points us there. This approach highlights the Davidic line to Christ, pregnant with all the implications of kingship and authority that Matthew's recounting of Christ's words brings forth.

But where will reading this passage according to a more thematic, theological approach take us? This approach calls our attention to the theme of the presence of God, which is so richly present throughout the Old Testament. The temple in all its significance emerges with greater profile, and Jesus' referring to himself as "something greater than the temple" takes center stage and sets forth Christ as God's new presence in the world, particularly among his people. In this connection, the sovereignty of Jesus over both the Sabbath and those observing the Sabbath makes the most sense.

In the end, both approaches lead us to Christ. Everything points to Christ and urges us, as Christ himself does, to come to him: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28–29). In this way, both approaches contribute to hearing the message of the gospel.

With passage after passage, the effect of reading the Bible should be, at least, a doubly reinforced hearing of the gospel. In every passage there is, at least, a double emphasis on the gospel, one narrative and one thematic, each combining with the other to strengthen and make more vivid the truth and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: The Gospel as Both Cause and Effect of Scripture

We conclude as we began. The great eternal redemptive plan of God is what scriptural revelation is all about. It is what gave rise to Scripture, and it is what God designed Scripture to bring about. The good news is the singular and majestic theme of Scripture: through the sinless life, substitutionary death, resurrection, present ministry, and triumphant return of Christ—when all things, "things in heaven and things on earth," will be united in him (Eph. 1:10)—God will accomplish his perfect purpose with humans and all creation (Rom. 8:21).

This then is what should inform and control all our "handling" of God's Word, both in our own personal appropriation of that Word and in our joyful proclamation of it, for the glory of God and the good of all the redeemed.

For Further Reading

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Notes

1. From his sermon entitled “How We May Read the Scriptures with Most Spiritual Profit,” as quoted in Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 53.
2. Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 275.

The Gospel Coalition

The Gospel Coalition is a fellowship of evangelical churches deeply committed to renewing our faith in the gospel of Christ and to reforming our ministry practices to conform fully to the Scriptures. We have become deeply concerned about some movements within traditional evangelicalism that seem to be diminishing the church's life and leading us away from our historic beliefs and practices. On the one hand, we are troubled by the idolatry of personal consumerism and the politicization of faith; on the other hand, we are distressed by the unchallenged acceptance of theological and moral relativism. These movements have led to the easy abandonment of both biblical truth and the transformed living mandated by our historic faith. We not only hear of these influences; we see their effects. We have committed ourselves to invigorating churches with new hope and compelling joy based on the promises received by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

We believe that in many evangelical churches a deep and broad consensus exists regarding the truths of the gospel. Yet we often see the celebration of our union with Christ replaced by the age-old attractions of power and affluence or by monastic retreats into ritual, liturgy, and sacrament. What replaces the gospel will never promote a mission-hearted faith anchored in enduring truth working itself out in unashamed discipleship eager to stand the tests of kingdom calling and sacrifice. We desire to advance along the King's highway, always aiming to provide gospel advocacy, encouragement, and education so that current- and next-generation church leaders are better equipped to fuel their ministries with principles and practices that glorify the Savior and do good to those for whom he shed his life's blood.

We want to generate a unified effort among all peoples—an effort that is zealous to honor Christ and multiply his disciples, joining in a true coalition for Jesus. Such a biblically grounded and united mission

is the only enduring future for the church. This reality compels us to stand with others who are stirred by the conviction that the mercy of God in Jesus Christ is our only hope of eternal salvation. We desire to champion this gospel with clarity, compassion, courage, and joy—gladly linking hearts with fellow believers across denominational, ethnic, and class lines.

Our desire is to serve the church we love by inviting all of our brothers and sisters to join us in an effort to renew the contemporary church in the ancient gospel of Christ so that we truly speak and live for him in a way that clearly communicates to our age. We intend to do this through the ordinary means of his grace: prayer, the ministry of the Word, baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the fellowship of the saints. We yearn to work with all who, in addition to embracing the confession and vision set out here, seek the lordship of Christ over the whole of life with unabashed hope in the power of the Holy Spirit to transform individuals, communities, and cultures.

“Christians intuitively agree that there is a necessary and deeply interpenetrating relationship between Scripture and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The exact nature of that relationship is a more challenging matter. While many lines of connection could be (and have been) productively explored, this [booklet] suggests and unpacks . . . connections between Scripture and the gospel. . . . All of Scripture is marked by this sense of being born out of some great divine initiative. In this sense, the gospel is a cause of biblical revelation. While Scripture itself is not the gospel, all Scripture is related to the gospel, and the gospel is Scripture’s reason for being.”

—From the booklet

These Gospel Coalition booklets are edited by D. A. Carson and Timothy Keller and are designed to offer thoughtful explanations of the ministry’s confessional statement. The Gospel Coalition is an evangelical movement dedicated to the gospel of Christ and a Scripture-based reformation of ministry practices.

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