

Living The
CROSS CENTERED LIFE
(Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing)

by
C. J. Mahaney

Highlighted for Leadership Training

by
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Forward:

The book you now hold in your hands is nothing less than a manifesto for turning your world upside down.

C. J. Mahaney, wants you to know & experience the cross centered life.

I need to warn you... Reading this book will not be a safe and static experience.

Qt: The cross isn't about playing it safe.

This book walks us through the real meaning of Christ's cross... "In the mystery of His mercy, God – the innocent, offended party – offers up to death His own Son, to satisfy His righteous wrath & save the guilty party from it."

That's about as clear a description of God's saving purpose as you will every find (**read Romans 3:21-28**)... it points directly to God's mercy toward sinners.

Mahaney explains why the good news of the cross is so infinitely good, and how you can know the grace of God through the message of the cross.

C. J. can be irritating at times.

C.J. tends to be very honest about sin & very clear about the fact that we can do nothing at all to deserve salvation.

This book will humble the proud... that's the power of the cross.

Our pride must be among the first things we surrender if we are to live the cross centered life.

Qt: The cross is deadly to pride.

C. J. also wants us to learn to celebrate the cross as the very ground of our salvation.

C. J. urges... "**Lay down the luggage of condemnation and kneel in worship at the feet of Him who bore your sins. Cry tears of amazement.**"

This will be an emotional experience... What Christ did for us in dying on the cross must move believers to the deepest depths of emotion. At the same time, C. J. warns us against trusting our emotions as the barometer of our Christian experience.

C. J. walks us into the transforming power of the cross.

Introduction:

AT THE CORE

Life's Most Important Truth Can Be the Easiest to Forget

"The Cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled, but we have to get near enough for its sparks to fall on us." – John Stott

Each of our lives is centered on something. What's at the center of yours?

Only one thing can truly be first in priority... so what's at the top of your list, second to none?

What are you most passionate about?

What do you love to talk about? What do you think about most? What really qualifies as the ONE THING God says should be the most important?

Try this... **What defines you?**

Sadly, an obsession with the latest innovation and the trendiest pursuit – and all in up-to-the-minute style – is as common inside the church as outside.

The Only Essentials:

Paul answer the question of "essentials" for us: *"Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you... For I delivered to you as **of first importance** what I also received: that Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:1,3)*

"First importance"

Paul is pointing us to the one transcendent truth that should define our lives.

One overarching truth should motivate all our work and affect every part of who we are: Christ died for our sins.

This, Paul says, is the main thing. Nothing else.

God sent His Son to the cross to bear His wrath for sinners like you and me.

If there is anything in life we should be passionate about, it's the gospel.

I don't mean passionate only about sharing it with others; I mean passionate in thinking about the gospel, reflecting upon it, rejoicing in it, allowing it to color the way we look at the world and all of life.

In the Scriptures we discover a profound urgency for focusing all we are and everything we do around the gospel of the cross.

Our Constant Danger

Qt: "I fear that the cross, without ever being disowned, is constantly in danger of being dismissed from the central place it must enjoy, by relatively peripheral insights that take on far too much weight. Whenever the periphery is in danger of displacing the center, we are not far removed from idolatry." - D.A. Carson

Qt: "All around us we see Christians and churches relaxing their grasp on the gospel, fumbling it, and in danger of letting it drop from their hands altogether." - John Stott

Everyday, we all face the temptation to move away from the gospel...

Three tendencies draw us away:

Subjectivism – basing our view of God on our changing feelings

Legalism – basing our relationship with God on our performance

Condemnation – being more focused on our sin than God's grace

What is the main thing in your life? If it is something other than the gospel – are you willing to repent to God and re-order your life? Read **Galatians 6:14**.

We Never Move On

Many people ask: 'If we as Christians have already received the gift of salvation... why focus any longer on the cross? Isn't it time to give our full attention to more mature matters of living out our faith?' Answer: Nope.

Qt: "We never move on from the cross, only into a more profound understanding of the cross." - David Prior

One purpose of this book is to restate the obvious yet oft-neglected truth of the gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ and bring it before you again – so that you more deeply grasp the crucial importance of never taking it for granted.

If you think that the truth of the cross is something you've already adequately understood... IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR LIFE IS ALREADY CROSS CENTERED, allow me to bring your attention to some "symptoms" of NOT being cross centered...

Do any of the following describe you?

You often lack joy.

You're not consistently growing in spiritual maturity.

Your love for God lacks passion.

You're always looking for some new techniques, some "new truth" or new experience to pull all the pieces of your faith together.

As you learn to live a cross centered life, you'll learn...

How to break free from joy-robbing, legalistic thinking & living

How to leave behind the crippling effects of guilt & condemnation

How to stop basing your faith on your emotions/circumstances

How to grow in gratefulness, joy, and holiness.

NOTE: These are God's promises to all who keep responding with their whole lives to the gospel.

Too many of us have stopped concentrating on the wonders of Jesus crucified.

More Real Than Ever

Qt: "I feel as if Jesus Christ died only yesterday." - Martin Luther

Is that how you feel??? As we cultivate our understanding and appreciation for the cross, we'll be more and more astonished and overwhelmed by God's grace... in a way that consistently engages our passion.

Do you continue to find your salvation an incredible miracle as you recall the judgment you genuinely deserve.

"For me, grace is never more amazing than when I'm looking intensely at the cross. There's nothing more overpowering and captivating to the soul than to climb Calvary's mountain with childlike attentiveness and wonder, with all the distractions and wrong assumptions cleared away." - C. J. Mahaney

Chapter One:

THE CLIMAX & THE KEY

Why the Cross Should Define Our Lives

“The gospel cannot be preached and heard enough, for it cannot be grasped well enough... Moreover, our greatest task is to keep you faithful to this article and to bequeath this treasure to you when we die.” - Martin Luther

HELD CAPTIVE

Paul simply refused to be pulled away from the gospel.

The cross was not merely “one” of Paul’s messages; the cross was THE message.

Whatever he taught was ALWAYS derived from, and related to, the foundational reality that Jesus Christ died so that sinners would be reconciled to God

Paul is gospel-centered... Paul is cross centered.

In every letter/epistle/book, Paul kept the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus at the center (1 Corinthians 2:2).

For Paul, the gospel was no cold theological formula...

Paul lived a cross centered life because he had saved his life and transformed his life.

Paul never forgot what he once had been, or the mercy and grace God showed him.

MERCY THAT CAN’T BE FORGOTTEN

I can relate to Paul’s amazement at being shown mercy and overflowing grace. I used to live for myself and my own pleasure... I lived in rebellion against God and mocked those who followed Him.

Often my eyes fill with tears at the memories of my foolishness and sin

At the same time, my heart will be filled with an unspeakable, holy joy. By the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, I’ve been forgiven of the countless sins I have committed.

Many people today try to run from their past. But... the regular reminders of my past are precious to me. Why? Because, like Paul, **I never want to forget the great mercy shown to me.**

A YOUNG MAN'S ESSENTIAL TRAINING

"We've all sinned and fall short of the glory of God." - Romans 3:23

God is perfectly holy and must respond with fierce opposition to sin.

God must punish sin.

Some find it surprising that I teach even a young boy about God's wrath toward sin. **But I find it surprising that any loving person would withhold the truth from another person they love.**

Because... **only when we understand God's wrath toward sin can we realize that we need to be saved from it.**

Only when we hear the bad news... can we appreciate the good news.

Only those who are aware of God's wrath are amazed at God's grace.

THE CLIMAX AND THE KEY

The cross climaxes the storyline of the Bible.

The gospel's truth is to saturate our lives just as much as it saturates Paul's writings and all of Scripture.

You need to rediscover the truth.

The key to joy, to growth, to passion... is THE Gospel.

Chapter Two:

THE DIVINE WORD

What You Feel vs. What Is Real

“Oh, the havoc that is wrought, and the tragedy, the misery, and the wretchedness that are to be found in the world, simply because people do not know how to handle their own feelings.”

- D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

We need to start by exploring the whole matter of our “feelings” – to learn how they affect our view of reality and the way we live.

This is a critical conversation... it can make all the difference in how much this book means to you.

If we want our hearts to be moved by the gospel, we have to start by putting our feelings in their proper place.

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

Have you ever considered how thoroughly most of us live by our feelings today – how feelings-focused we are?

Our tendency is to begin with the “internal,” the subjective, the experiential, then use those feelings and impressions to determine what we’ll accept as being objective fact.

Qt: We let our feelings tell us what is true, in stead of letting the truth transform our feelings.

We’re conditioned to this approach by our sin and by our culture...

Both sin & our culture incessantly entice us to do whatever makes us feel good – along with the flattering assurance that non-stop “feeling good” is something we absolutely deserve!

Our emotions are fickle, easily dominated by any number of influences...

Our feelings simply cannot be trusted.

SELDOM AMAZED

Even when it comes to our spiritual life... we direct and locate our faith in our emotional state rather than in clearly objective truth.

We tend to ask God for more “experience,” THEN, we assure Him that if He will give us the experiences, we will acknowledge Him & believe His truth.

For example... in our corporate worship, our “passion” is often absent... also when we open our Bibles, we skim and skip over words like “redemption,” “Savior,” “gospel,” “justified,” etc.... evoking little response in us. We unthinkingly pass over these words to find “something else that might light our fire.”

It is a frightening experience to sit with someone who insists that what they “feel” is ultimately more authoritative than Scripture.

Often, such people even insist that God is sympathetic to this attitude. **He is NOT.**

To place one’s feelings above Scripture is the height of arrogance.

Remember... God gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

OUR FIRST RESPONSE

Who are the humble to whom God is pointing?

The humble are those who say: “I will believe the objective truth of His Word, regardless of how I feel.”

Qt: “What we have in the Bible is truth; it is not an emotional stimulus...” – D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Qt: When we focus first on truth, feelings follow!

Feelings born out of truth will be reliable feelings, because they are anchored in truth... **That is the divine order.**

GETTING THINGS IN ORDER

This is not to say that we never evaluate our feelings... that’s just not where we start when we encounter truth.

The starting place is to choosing to believe the truth regardless of how we feel.

Deep and profound feelings are the inevitable effect of Scripture rightly understood and believed.

Qt: There is heart-transforming truth in the Scriptures, but you won’t encounter it by first trying to feel it.

If you invest your feelings with final authority – they'll deposit you on the emotional roller coaster which so often characterizes our lives.

LISTENING TO OURSELVES

“Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?” - Lloyd-Jones

THE VOICE OF OUR FEELINGS

Everyday we are faced with two choices...

We can listen to ourselves and our constantly changing feelings about our circumstances...

Or... **We can talk to ourselves about the unchanging truth of who God is and what He has accomplished for us at the cross through His Son Jesus.**

OUTWARD INSTEAD OF INWARD

Another way to highlight the difference between talking to ourselves versus listening to ourselves is to think of an outward, objective focus versus an inward, subjective focus.

We can learn to focus outward and upward, regardless of how we feel.

The gospel is objective fact.

That which is subjective changes regularly, like shifting sand. But that which is objective is built on solid rock.

When we look inward, we live by the subjective, the ever-changing, the unreliable, the likely-to-be-false.

When we look out-ward, to the gospel, we live by the objective truth.

EMOTIONS IN THEIR PROPER PLACE

The cross centered life starts with biblical thinking.

Will you therefore build your life on what is real – or merely on what you feel?

Qt: “We think with our feelings.” - Sinclair Ferguson

It's true. We allow our feelings to guide our thinking, and we shouldn't.

Our emotions shouldn't be vested with final authority. Final authority should be reserved for God's Word alone.

Where do you consistently direct your faith? **What does your faith rest on?**

WHERE IT MATTERS MOST

The divine order begins not with ourselves, but with God.

Putting God and His objective truth first is never more applicable or valuable than when we draw near the cross, which is the hinge and center of human history.

SEARCHING THE MYSTERY

A Captivating Picture of His Love

*“Lest I forget Gethsemane; Lest I forget Thine agony;
Lest I forget Thy love for me;
Lead me to Calvary.*

by

Jennie Evelyn Hussey

For a culture accustomed to thinking of the cross mostly as a piece of jewelry, seeing Mel Gibson’s “Passion of the Christ” was a jolting experience...

Even images from “The Passion of the Christ” cannot adequately convey the gospel’s content.

Qt: The Gospel’s message isn’t visual; it’s truth.

Scripture is clear: “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

It’s only the preaching of the gospel, not the depiction of it, that God promises to accompany with saving effect.

Although “The Passion of the Christ” brought millions to an unprecedented awareness of “how” Jesus died, it couldn’t adequately convey “WHY” Jesus died.

I feared that without a clarifying theological explanation, the movie’s impact on most people would be superficial, vague, and fleeting.

Do you understand the deepest reasons behind the cross?

ABIDING HARD BY THE CROSS

Qt: “Abide hard by the cross and search the mystery of His wounds.” – Spurgeon

We want to look carefully and study closely the purpose of our Savior’s sufferings, from His agonizing prayer in the garden to His cry of forsakenness on the cross.

Look with more depth and detail at WHY He suffered and what He uniquely accomplished by His suffering in relation to God and for the sinner.

Throughout this book we want to let the Holy Spirit bring us “hard by” the cross – as near it as possible – and to “abide” there, staying and dwelling in its shadow.

We want to let the biblical writers take our hands and lead us where no movie can go.

What is the meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? Do you know?

A BLOOD STAINED PROPHECY

One of the best places in Scripture to reflect deeply on the meaning of Christ's death is a passage the Spurgeon called "**the Bible in miniature and gospel in essence**" – Isaiah 53

Qt: "Isaiah 53 takes us to the heart of the human problem and the heart of the divine mind." - Derek Tidball

Qt: "Though Isaiah 53 was written some 700 years before Christ's death, it looks as if it had been written beneath the cross upon Golgotha" – Franz Delitzsch

Qt: "All of Scripture is blood-stained, but Christ's death is particularly pronounced in Isaiah 53." Isaiah brings us right to the cross...

THE APPEARANCE

In this profound chapter (Isaiah 53), God is speaking to His people about someone He simply calls "My servant" – unquestionably the Lord Jesus Christ, as New Testament quotations of this passage make clear.

Isaiah portrays the Servant' origins in unimpressive terms... In physical appearance, the Servant is equally unimpressive.

By all humans standards this Servant fails to impress...

Human expectations of what a savior should be haven't changed much down thru the ages. Seven centuries later Paul would summarize people's continuing misconceptions: "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 1:22-23).

By divine design, the gospel is foolishness to all who through pride are governed by the wisdom of this world, restricted to human observation and impressed only by outward appearance.

THE REALITY

Isaiah 53:4-6 plants us squarely beneath the cross.

These verses speak first of “our” condition – yours and mine. At least 10 times in these lines we read the pronouns “our,” “we,” and “us.” But it isn’t a pretty picture.

Our part in the divine drama... We’re mentioned only as contributing to the sin that makes the suffering necessary – and unimaginably excruciating.

This suffering Servant is suffering for us, and He’s suffering as our substitute... That’s HIS part in this divine drama.

The language of “substitution” – one person taking the place of another – pervades these verses, interwoven through the language of suffering.

Isaiah is showing us, in profound detail, what the New Testament will later teach us.

ALL DIE!

All sinners face the righteous threat of furious wrath from a holy God.

Eternal, righteous wrath is the threat for “all who have gone astray.”

While we are all guilty of sin and deserving of God’s wrath... the innocent One, God the Son, stepped forward to die for the rest of us.

On that cross the Servant, the holy One, suffered “for” sinners like you and me, “because” of sinners like you and me, and as the “substitute” for sinners like you and me.

Yet the locals said Jesus’ crucifixion was justified... that He was being judged and punished, rightly, for His sin of blasphemy.

BE PERSUADED OF HIS LOVE

The motivation of God the Father in sacrificing His Son as our substitute is uniquely revealed – shockingly and startlingly exposed – in Isaiah 53:10... “It was the will of the Lord to crush Him; He has put Him to grief.”

The death of the Servant was not the fruit of human initiative and design.

The death of the Servant was God’s plan, God’s purpose, God’s will.

When you are tempted to doubt God’s love for you, stand before the cross and look at the wounded, dying, disfigured Savior, and realize why He is there... I think God the Father would whisper in your ear at that point... “Isn’t that sufficient?”

“What more could I do to persuade you that I love you?” - God

That’s how far God’s love goes. And that’s what it all means.

Qt: “When we think of Christ’s dying on the cross... God is saying to us, ‘I love you this much.’ The cross is the heart of the gospel; it makes the gospel good news. Christ died for us; He bore our sins. God has done something on the cross which we could never do for ourselves. But God does something “to” us as well as “for” us through the cross... He persuades us that He loves us.”

Are you persuaded? If not, what more could God possibly do to persuade you?

THE DIVINE DILEMMA

An Inescapable Penalty & a Longed-for Salvation

*“Men are opposed to God in their sin,
and God is opposed to men in His holiness. – J. I. Packer*

WORSE THAN LEPERS

I am a sinner. I need a Savior. The world is full of sinners in need of a Savior.

R. C. Sproul wrote that the most perplexing theological question is not why there’s suffering in this world, but rather, why God tolerates us in our sinfulness.

God’s mercy is indeed an incredible mystery.

When we miss the mess of our sinfulness, we miss the majesty of His mercy.

When you tell non-Christians that God loves them, they are not surprised, they are not perplexed, they are not stunned. Regrettably, the same is true amongst most evangelicals, who simply assume this gracious disposition of God – and therefore presume upon it... We will continue to do this until we learn to see our condition more fully from God’s perspective.

GOD’S INSOLENT OPPONENTS

For God, the divine dilemma comes about because He isn’t indifferent to any of this sinfulness on mankind’s part.

Qt: God is righteously & furiously opposed to every bit of sin.

He cannot simply overlook sin or excuse it. In light of His holiness and justice, He has no alternative but to punish sin and punish the sinner.

God is righteous and must do what is right in punishing sin.

And yet, God “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

What an impossible predicament! A holy God can respond only in furious wrath to sin; how much more so when the sin is persistent, intrinsic evil! How could He ever forgive, pardon, save, and be reconciled with those who are entrenched and enslaved in such blatant hostility toward Him?

IF ONLY...

If only there were someone to arbitrate between a suffering man and a holy God.

That's exactly where you and I are in our humanity... ready to die under the righteous wrath of a holy Lord, with absolutely no hope... except to cry out for a mediator.

The incredibly good news for all of us is that there IS someone to arbitrate between God and humanity. There IS someone to touch us both. (His name is Jesus!)

THE DIVINE RESCUE

Why Only Jesus Christ Could Save Us

*The debt was so great, that while man alone owed it,
only God could pay it. – Anselm*

Very small errors in a person's understanding of the gospel often results in very big problems in that person's life (and eternity).

KEY TO THE BIBLE

If you were searching for a single sentence in Scripture to best capture the storyline and them of the entire Bible, what would you choose?

Many would go directly to John 3:16, with good reason.

But, let me suggest considering **1 Timothy 2:5-6**...

Fix your thoughts on this sentence: "For this one God, and there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time."

J. I. Packer says these verses are "the key, not merely to the New Testament, but to the whole Bible, for they crystallize into a phrase the sum and substance of its message."

In the mystery of His mercy, God – the innocent, offended party – offers up His own Son to death, to satisfy His righteous wrath and save the guilty party from it.

Qt: Divine love triumphed over divine wrath by divine Self sacrifice. – Stott

UNIQUE MAN, UNIQUE WORK

Only someone both fully divine and truly human can effectively mediate between God and man, and Jesus is exactly that.

Paul insists there's only "one Mediator," just as surely as there is only "one God."

Notice how Paul transitions immediately from the Savior's birth ("the man Christ Jesus") to His saving death ("who gave Himself as a ransom for all").

Qt: Christ's death was the purpose of His birth.

Qt: God sent His Son to live a uniquely perfect life and die a unique death as the substitute for our sins.

BOTH LIKE US, AND UNLIKE US

Only a human being can be the perfect substitute for other human beings... sin committed by "man" must be atoned for by a man.

Sin condemns all men (except Jesus), therefore only He can fulfill the need...

A divine rescue is necessary. We need a Savior! Our Savior must be like us in our human-ness, yet unlike us in that He must be sinless. Since only a perfect sacrifice will do, our Savior must also be God... enter Jesus!

God's holy hostility against us (meaning true Christians) has ended. The divine dilemma is resolved. That's what Christ's death means to God.

NO BETTER NEWS

And what does Christ's death mean for us – for all who turn from their sins and trust in this unique Mediator?

First, we have peace with God

Second, no more condemnation from God... what amazing grace!

And you and I have the privilege as well as the responsibility of proclaiming the good news... That's why we must deeply understand it ourselves and take it to heart, so we can share it accurately and passionately with others.

STARING INTO THE CUP

The Shock of Gethsemane

*The garden of Gethsemane is one of the most sacred and solemn
Scenes in the entire Bible. – Sinclair Ferguson*

When we look at Jesus in the pages of the Gospels... words like “authoritative,” “assured,” and “fearless” truly describe Him – He’s unfailingly steady and controlled.

But as we follow Him into Gethsemane, all is radically changed. Suddenly we encounter a Savior we’re unfamiliar with. What we observe is foreign and frightening.

Jesus “began to be greatly distressed and troubled.”

NEARLY DYING

In Jerusalem, He stood up to the religious establishment and confronted their hypocrisy without the slightest qualm of intimidation, even to the point of fashioning a whip and chasing out their money-changers.

He has been consistently bold, brave and clam... that was far different from the sheer torment we see overtaking Him now, under moonlit branches of Gethsemane’s olive grove.

UNPREPARED

We’re seeing Jesus more vulnerable and more human than we’ve ever known.

Why? Why this shuddering terror, this staggering distress?

Earlier this evening, with solemn dignity, He inaugurated the Lord’s Supper and led them in singing a hymn...

It’s not as if Jesus is surprised by death’s approach. He long ago determined to bear God’s judgment for sin as our substitute, and for months He has discussed His death repeatedly with His disciples.

Nor is He avoiding or postponing the hour of sacrifice for which He came...

Nothing has prepared us for Gethsemane, for this abrupt horror... Why?

WHAT IT MEANT TO HIM

Here's why. **In this garden, our Savior is beginning to confront the ultimate and deepest agony of Calvary – an agony that will go infinitely beyond and physical aspects of His suffering.**

For Jesus, the cross will bring incomparable and unprecedented suffering of wrath and abandonment.

We need divine assistance to take it in, to absorb deeply what bearing away our sin meant to Jesus.

THE DETESTABLE DRINK

We overhear Jesus praying: **“Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what You will.”**

He is making this plea repeatedly.

His expression reveals an agony so intense that His sweat is “like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

This cup is clearly a reference to the wrath of God, for your sins and mine.

This cup contains the full vehemence and fierceness of God's holy wrath poured out against all sin... and we discover in Scripture that it's intended for all of sinful humanity to drink.

IT'S YOUR CUP... AND MINE.

In the crucible of human weakness He's brought face-to-face with the abhorrent reality of bearing our iniquity and becoming the object of God's full & furious wrath.

HELL, NOT HEAVEN

What Jesus recoils from here is not an anticipation of the physical pain associated with crucifixion.

What Jesus recoils from here is instead, an infinitely greater pain, the agony of being abandoned by His Father.

We hear Jesus cry out: **“Father – is there an alternative? Is there any way to avoid this? If there's a way this cup could pass from Me, would you please provide that to Me?”**

SILENCE. Jesus receives no answer...

A second time He pleads for an alternative...

If such an alternative existed, the Father would most surely provide it.

LISTEN TO THIS VERSE AGAIN – FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME: “For God so loved the world that He gave is only Son that who-so-ever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.”

“For God so loved the world...” that He was silent to His Son’s agonizing appeal.

ANOTHER CUP

As we watch Jesus pray in agony in Gethsemane, He has every right to turn His tearful eyes toward you and me and shout, “This is YOUR cup. YOU”RE responsible for this. It’s YOUR sin! YOU drink it.”

This cup should rightfully be thrust into MY hand and yours.

Instead, Jesus freely takes it Himself...

Jesus takes the cup so that, from the cross, He can look down at you and me, whisper our names, and say, “I DRINK THIS CUP FOR YOU – FOR YOU WHO HAVE LIVED IN DEFIANCE OF ME... YOU WHO HAVE HATED ME... YOU WHO HAVE OPPOSED ME..... I DRINK IT ALL – FOR YOU.”

This is what our sin makes necessary.

Behold Him... behold His suffering... and RECOGNIZE HIS LOVE.

YOUR FACE IN THE CROWD

Our Part in the Savior's Death

*"We may try to wash our hands of responsibility, like Pilate,
but our attempt will be futile, as futile as his.
For there is blood on our hands." - John Stott*

We saw Jesus enter Gethsemane shuddering, His soul deeply distressed.

But when He emerges from the garden, we see Him composed & authoritative. Jesus says, "Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

STRENGTH TO ENDURE

Though there was silence in response to the Son's request for an alternative to the cross, **at the close of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane, "there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him."**

Jesus knows that this is the hour for which He was born.

This is the reason He's come into the world, and He in no way wants to resist it.

He was born to die as our Mediator.

You and I know we're going to die, what we don't know is when or how.

But Jesus knew when, He knew how... and most importantly, He knew why.

"What dominated Jesus' mind wasn't so much the living of His life, but the giving of His life." - John Stott

Jesus said it Himself... Listen to our Savior's own testimony: **"The Son of Man came... to give His life as a ransom for many."**

Consequently, Jesus offers His accusers no rebuttal or protest, and Pilate is astounded.

THERE THAT DAY

With whom do you most identify in the events of that dark day?

Of the many onlookers & participants... **whose actions are most like your own?**

Peter – weeping in the aftermath of his betrayal

Simon of Cyrene – the one forced to carry Christ's cross for Him

The “Women” – who “stood at a distance watching these things”
Mary (mother of Jesus) – “standing by the cross of Jesus”
John (the Apostle) – who was also “standing nearby”
Thief – who cried out to Jesus in faith from his own cross
Centurion Guard – moved to say: “Surely this was the Son of God”
Angry Mob – those crying out “Crucify Him!”

We should all identify with the angry mob... because apart from God’s grace, this is where we would all be standing

We’re only flattering ourselves to think otherwise.

Unless you see yourself standing there with the shrieking crowd, full of hostility and hatred for the holy and innocent Lamb of God, you don’t really understand the nature and depth of your sin – or the necessity of the cross.

FROM OUR HAND

When we begin to grasp that WE are to blame for the Savior’s death – we start to understand the seriousness of our sin.

Convicting you of sin is not my ultimate purpose here; rather, I want to convince you of grace.

When you are deeply aware of your sin, and of what an affront it is to God’s holiness... you can only be, overwhelmed with how amazing grace really is!

Only those who are truly aware of their sin can truly cherish grace.

THE SCREAM OF THE DAMNED

Our Savior's Worst Torment

"This cry represents the most agonizing protest ever uttered on this planet. It burst forth in an moment of unparalleled pain. It is the scream of the damned... for us." – R.C. Sproul

PROPHETIC MOCKERY

Those passing by wag their heads and say, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." The chief priests and the scribes and elders echo the mockery: "He saved others; He cannot save Himself."

Make no mistake; Jesus can descend from the cross and save Himself at any moment. It isn't the nails that keep Him there... What keeps Him there is what placed Him there – His love for sinners like you and me.

In their spiritual blindness they in effect express sublime spiritual truth... for Jesus cannot save both Himself and save you and me.

It is precisely because He refused to save Himself that He's able to save us.

"Until you see the cross as that which is done BY YOU, you will never appreciate that it is done FOR YOU." - John Stott

Martin Luther said that we all carry His nails in our pockets... Are you aware of those nails in your possession?

CRUSHING DARKNESS

For hours we see Jesus hanging...

We hear: **"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."**

Meanwhile, at midday, a darkness comes over the land – a supernatural darkness, confirmation of the judgment of God.

ABLE TO BEAR IT NO LONGER

Suddenly His face contorts in a display of anguish more terrible than anything we've seen yet...

Jesus screams out: "My God, My God! Why have You forsaken Me?"

The cry is a question – but Jesus is not accusing His Father; nor is He perplexed as to why He’s dying. It is a question from David’s words in Psalm 22...

On the cross, our Lord is fulfilling that messianic Psalm. But Jesus is also doing more... He’s experiencing on the cross, what no one in human history ever has or ever will experience.

Jesus is receiving what you and I should be receiving – His Father’s full and furious wrath.

Jesus is experiencing what every other human being in history deserves and what He alones does NOT deserve... and He’s experiencing it ALONE!

TRUE ALONENESS

He who for all eternity has never been alone is now wholly abandoned.

It is the monstrous sight of the unbounded totality of human sin resting upon one Man

Therefore, that Man must be utterly removed from the presence of the holy God, utterly separated, as far as the east is from the west.

Jesus doesn’t just feel forsaken, He IS forsaken.

In an unfathomable mystery, at that moment, as God’s wrath is poured upon Him as the substitute for our sin, Jesus is rejected by God. His Father turns away from Him. It isn’t a deceptive feeling; it’s reality.

THE MIRACLE

What could be more amazing? What greater reason can there be for you and me to praise and thank Him?

The personal desolation Christ is experiencing on the cross is what you and I should be experiencing.

Jesus is alone so that we might never be alone.

He was cut off from His Father so that we can boldly say: “Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.”

DON’T EVER GROW OVER-FAMILIAR WITH GOD’S FORGIVENESS!

What a miracle sacrificial forgiveness is... What a gift from God!

Nothing in all creation is more steeped in the miraculous than the fact of your forgiveness and mine.

God, in abandoning His Son, is treating Jesus as a sinner so that He can treat you and me - who ARE sinners - as if we were righteous... all because of Jesus!

WHAT GOD UNDERSTANDS

His Presence in Our Suffering

“The God on whom we rely knows what suffering is all about, not merely in the way that God knows everything, but by experience.” – D.A. Carson

Our heavenly Father always understands our suffering, for at Calvary, He knew suffering that infinitely exceeds anything we’ll ever encounter.

DARK HOURS

In our time of deepest affliction, none of us find comfort by endlessly focusing on that suffering.

There is an element of mystery in all our suffering, and in this life, we can’t fully understand it, yet we face a subtle temptation to relive and review our suffering.

What WILL bring rest and release is spending more time meditating on the cross and the God of the cross.

So, I point to the cross of Christ... for there is no greater encouragement, and no greater motivation for everything God has called you to in life.

Recognize His love for you in HIS darkest hour, and in so doing, receive His care for you in YOUR darkest hour(s).

It is a fallen world, hence, we will all suffer. So, we must all prepare for it.

We need to be trained PRIOR TO suffering, so that we may be fully sustained IN suffering.

INCOMPARABLE SOURCE

You and I have never been and will never be abandoned by God.

I know that at times it feels like God has abandoned us, but those are deceptive feelings.

Remember... the One who drank this cup says to you and me: “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

Christians may occasionally feel alone, but we never truly are alone.

His suffering becomes our highest and best source of comfort in distress...

Read Hebrews 4:16 anew... *“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (in our own dark hour of suffering).

ALWAYS ENOUGH

In our own depths of suffering, the Father does not send an angel; He sends us the Savior.

In our trials, we are given comfort and strength BY JESUS Himself!

Regardless of how dark a day becomes, regardless of the severity of the anguish we'll experience, He's ALWAYS present... and that is sufficient!

ASSURANCE & JOY

Enjoying the Results of a Cross Centered Life

*“Nothing in my hand I bring;
simply to Your cross I cling.” – Augustus Toplady*

When life did not make sense to the prophet Habakkuk, when all he saw on the horizon was appalling and dreadful suffering for himself and God’s people, he responded this way: “Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.” He turned his attention away from suffering and fixed it upon the more vital issue of salvation.

In your own times of severe distress, which are you more aware of... your suffering or your salvation?

“Your sufferings are not so great as your sins; put these two in the balance, and see which weighs heaviest.” - Puritan Thomas Watson

We can rejoice in our salvation even amid great affliction when we recognize how much worse we deserve because of our sins.

PERSONAL ASSURANCE OF HIS LOVE

As a pastor, few things affect me more than interacting with those who are unaware of God’s personal love for them.

Sinclair Ferguson says we lack assurance of His personal grace to us “because we fail to focus on that spot where He has revealed it.” That spot is obviously the cross.

The distractions that turn us away from the cross are so incessant & numerous.... But failing to focus on the right spot has serious consequences.

So here is my question for you: **Over the last week, what was your primary preoccupation in life? What was your focus?**

Was it on the cross or on your own personal circumstances, your own condition, your own concerns?

Was your preoccupation with your personal pursuit of godliness?

Growth in godliness must be pursued, but never apart from joyful gratitude for the cross.

This is why I recommend a steady spiritual diet of studying the cross....

Let there never be a lengthy period of time where you aren't receiving inspiration and instruction related directly to the cross.

Martin Luther wrote that he taught the gospel "again and again, because I greatly fear that after we have laid our head to rest, it will soon be forgotten and will again disappear."

We live amidst a relentless danger... We have a constant tendency to stop remembering the cross, and to start depending on legalism & self effort.

BREAKING THE RULE OF LEGALISM

How the Cross Rescues You from the Performance Trap

“How easily we fall into the trap of assuming that we remain justified only so long as there are grounds in our character for justification.” - Sinclair Ferguson

There are three main tendencies that tend to draw us away from the gospel and cross centered life:

Subjectivism – basing our view of God on our changing feelings

Legalism – basing our relationship with God on our own performance

Condemnation – being more focused on our sin than God’s grace

From the earliest days of the church, legalism has sidetracked Christians and thrown them off course.

Legalism is far more pervasive than most of us realize.

Legalism Defined: **Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God and justification before God through obedience to God.**

A legalist is anyone who behaves as if they can earn God’s forgiveness through personal performance.

ROOTED IN SELF WORSHIP

Legalism is a sinful fruit from sinful roots.

“Legalism has its origin in self-worship.” – Thomas Schreiner

If people are justified through their obedience to the law, then they merit praise, honor, and glory. Legalism, in other words, means the glory goes to people rather than God.

Legalism, therefore, claims in essence, that the death of Jesus on the cross was either unnecessary or insufficient. It tells God that the cross wasn’t enough and that we need to add good works to be saved.

Legalism is essentially self-atonement for the purpose of self-glorification and self-worship.

It is the pinnacle of pride for me to assume that by my good works I could ever morally obligate God to forgive me, justify me, or accept me.

Beware... we tend to make light of whatever legalistic tendencies we recognize I ourselves.

The tendency for legalism exists for each of us each and every day – because of the pride and self-righteousness of our indwelling sin.

Legalism could not be more serious! Do you know how to discern legalism's presence in your life?

SPINNING PLATES

A helpful picture of how legalism can hijack a Christian's life... the life of a legalist can become as frenetic as the plate-spinner's performance.

The plates we spin are various spiritual activities – such as Bible reading, prayer, or sharing the gospel – that are good and vital in themselves when pursued for the right reasons.

Often we don't realize it but we allow a dangerous shift to take place in our mind and heart. We change what God intends as a means of "experiencing" grace into a means of "earning" grace... and spiritual activities become spinning plates to maintain.

Do you lack holy joy?

Do you look to your spinning plates for the confidence or right to approach God?

JUSTIFIED; THE FINISHED WORK

The issue is our motive and our understanding of what it means to be saved by grace.

"Justification" refers to your status before God.

When you put your faith in Jesus, God the Judge hands down the verdict that you are righteous. He transfers the sinless record of Jesus to you!

This is amazing grace at its most amazing!

SANCTIFIED; THE ONGOING WORK

The power of the gospel doesn't end when we're justified...

When God declares a sinner righteous, He immediately begins the process of making that sinner more like His Son.

Through the work of His Spirit, through the power of His Word, and involvement with the local church, God peels away our desires for sin, renews our minds, and changes our lives.

Sanctification is the “process” here-described... it is a process of becoming more and more Christ-like, growing in holiness.

Sanctification does not end for the Christian until they meet Christ face to face.

Sanctification is about our obedience. It involves work.

Empowered by God’s Spirit, we strive. We fight sin. We study Scripture. We pray. We flee temptation. We press on!

DON’T CONFUSE THE TWO

If you do not understand the distinction between “justification” and “sanctification,” you will be vulnerable to legalism...

We must distinguish between “justifying grace” and “sanctifying grace”

Justification is being *declared* righteous. Whereas *Sanctification* is being *made* righteous – being conformed to the image of Christ.

Justification is our *position* before God, a position that becomes permanently ours at the time of our conversion. *Sanctification* is our *practice* that continues throughout our life on earth.

Justification is *immediate* and complete upon conversion. You’ll never be more justified than you are the first moment you trust in the Person and finished work of Christ. *Sanctification* is the *progressive process*. You’ll be more sanctified as you continue in grace-motivated obedience.

Justification is *objective*... Christ’s work *for* us. *Sanctification* is *subjective*... Christ’s work *within* us.

The weakest believer and the strongest saint are equally justified.

A man is either wholly justified or wholly condemned in the sight of God.

Justification admits no degrees.

THE LEGALIST’S MISTAKE

Legalists confuse their own ongoing participation in the process of sanctification with God’s finished work in justification.

Legalists assume good works contribute to justification.

None of us earn God's approval and love by our good works.

None of us can add to the finished, complete work of Jesus on the cross.

Yes... we work hard at obeying God's Word... growing through sanctifying choices. BUT... we are never "more saved" or "more loved" by God than the second we are justified.

PUT DOWN YOUR PLATES

"Our greatest temptation and mistake is to try to smuggle character into God's work of grace." - Sinclair Ferguson

Such is the mistake of legalistic plate spinners.

Legalists allow their performance to become their preoccupation. In doing so, they walk away from the gospel.

I make a point of reminding myself that Jesus' work, not mine, is the basis of my forgiveness and acceptance by God.

We are justified by grace alone.

UPLOADING CONDEMNATION

How the Cross Removes Guilt and Shame

*“All the love and the acceptance
which perfect obedience could have obtained of God,
belong to you because Christ was perfectly obedient
on your behalf.” – Charles Spurgeon*

CHECK YOUR BAGS

We can all generate a depressing list of things undone & unaccomplished...

We all have tendencies to carry hundreds of pounds of “baggage”

The Bible calls our “baggage” condemnation...

Some of us have been carrying so much baggage/condemnation for so long that we think it’s normal to go through life weighed down.

The truth is... apart from the cross, condemnation IS normal.

Without Jesus we all deserve to be condemned and punished for sin.

Here’s the good news... “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

You can unload the crippling affect of condemnation by embracing the forgiveness offered by the gospel.

LOW GRADE GUILT

Condemnation is something we all deal with at one time or another in different degrees...

We can become condemned over any sin, great or small.

The common element is a sustained sense of guilt or shame over sins for which you have repented to God.

Ask yourself the following:

Do you relate to God as if you were on a kind of permanent probation?

When you come to worship do you maintain a respectful distance from God?

When you read Scripture, does it reveal the boundless love of the Savior or merely intensify your condemnation?

Are you more aware of your sin than you are of God's grace, given to you through the cross?

Don't keep carrying the burden.

Because of the gospel's power you can be completely free of all condemnation.

Don't buy the lie that condemnation and shame are somehow pleasing to God, or that constant, low grade guilt will somehow promote holiness and spiritual maturity.

It is just the opposite!

God is glorified when we believe with all our hearts that those who trust in Christ can never be condemned.

It is only when we receive His free gift of grace and live in the good of total forgiveness that we're able to walk in grace-motivated obedience.

OUR MANY SINS

The woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears was someone who had repented of her sins.

This isn't the account of her salvation; rather, this is a beautiful expression of Christian worship born of her love, adoration, and thankfulness toward her Savior. She recognizes her sin and unworthiness.

Her tears are not tears of condemnation, but rather, tears of joy, gratitude, and extravagant devotion.

LOSE YOUR BAGGAGE

Our sinfulness is a reality.

But the reality of the death and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sin is even greater.

On a daily basis, the baggage of condemnation will show up on our doorstep...

When these challenges come, don't try to fight condemnation by "working harder" on spiritual disciplines...

It is impossible to resolve issues of "yesterday" by doing better tomorrow.

Our promises of future obedience cannot resolve condemnation for past sin.

BEATING CONDEMNATION

Here's how to beat condemnation:

Confess your sin to God... then believe in Him.

Exercise the gift of faith God has given you to believe Jesus died for the very sins you are feeling condemned for. You can't atone for your sin. Jesus did it for you.

Kneel in worship at the feet of Him who bore your sins.

Cry tears of amazement.

THE CROSS CENTERED DAY

Practical Ways to Focus Daily on the Cross

“The traveler through the Bible landscape misses his way as soon as he loses sight of the hill called Calvary.” - J.I. Packer

Our habits reflect our true selves, our top priorities and passions.

We make time for what we truly value. We build habits and routines around the things that really matter to us.

This is an important principle to understand as we seek to build our lives around the gospel.

“Cross centered lives are made up of cross centered days... and those days are the ones in which we stay near enough to the cross...”

Key Question:

How do you keep the flame of gospel passion burning brightly in the drizzle of real life?

Key Answer: PREACH the GOSPEL to YOURSELF!

Reminding ourselves of the gospel is the most important daily habit we can establish.

We should create ways to immerse ourselves in these truths every day.

No days off!

Preaching the gospel to yourself is simple... Christ died for your sins!

It’s a matter of sitting down, grabbing your own attention, and telling yourself: “Hey, listen up! This is what matters most: You’re forgiven! You have hope! Let today be governed by this one defining truth.

5 ways to draw near to the cross in the midst of busy days....

1. *Memorize the Gospel*

God wants us to tuck His promises into our hearts so that we can pull them out and be strengthened by their truth.

Memorize Scripture – start with gospel defining & gospel describing verses.

Having these verses instantly accessible is so helpful!

If you find yourself losing perspective in the midst of life's daily troubles, reach into your memory and pull out some of these verses:

2 Corinthians 5:21

Romans 8:31-34

Isaiah 53:3-6

Romans 3:23-26

Romans 5:6-11

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

Galatians 2:20-21

2. Pray the Gospel

The gospel should be at the center of your prayer life because it makes it possible for us to approach God.

The gospel gives us the confidence to pray boldly.

To pray the gospel, simply begin by thanking God for the forgiveness of sins.

Acknowledge that Christ's work on the cross is what makes prayer possible.

Thank Him that because of the cross you're reconciled to God and have been given the Holy Spirit to dwell in you, lead you, guide you, and empower you to resist sin and serve God.

Then ask God to bless you graciously with everything you need to obey and glorify Him.

The gospel should be woven throughout our praise, our petitions, and our intercessions.

3. Sing the Gospel

Not all worship songs are created equal...

Many songs sung in churches today are more man-centered than Christ-centered... they focus more on what we need or what we want God to do than on what Jesus has already done.

4. Review how the Gospel has Changed You

One of the best ways to we can draw near the cross is to remember our past & allow it to remind us of how marvelous God's salvation really is. (see apostle Paul's ongoing example)

Every salvation conversion is a miracle of God!

Great Tool: write out your testimony & really spell out the heart of the gospel and how the blood of Christ, shed for the sins of the world, came to apply to you personally... Be specific!

Identify the sin in which you were lost. Explain how God saved you and changed your life for His glory. (B.C. @ A.D.)

5. Study the Gospel

To grow in your PASSION for what Jesus has done... increase your UNDERSTANDING of what He has done.

NEVER be content with your current grasp of the gospel!

The gospel has more facets than any diamond. We will never exhaust its depths.

Camp out in the books of Romans & Galatians...

Take the time to learn the true, full-context, biblical definitions of:

Atonement

Substitution

Propitiation

Justification

Redemption

Reconciliation

Salvation

Jerry Bridges' book *The Gospel for Real Life* is a great help...

Read your whole Bible with your eyes peeled for the gospel.

EVERY passage of Scripture – in both the O.T. and the N.T. – either predicts, prepares for, reflects, or results from the work of Christ.

Identify how each passage relates to the cross.

Another help.... Make it an annual goal to read or reread at least one book on the cross. A great book to start with is John Stott's *The Cross of Christ*.

Quote from the book:

"It was by His death that Jesus wished above all else to be remembered."

Another great book to consider...
Charles Spurgeon's *The Power of the Cross of Christ*

For ministry leaders... *The Cross and Christian Ministry* by D.A. Carson is a must-read per C.J. Mahaney

You Can't Do This On Your Own:

We need God's Spirit to light the truths of the cross within our hearts.

Every time we memorize, pray, sing, review, or study the gospel, we must ask the Holy Spirit to open our eyes and bring the gospel alive to us again.

Keep drawing near, and build a cross centered life one day at a time.

NEVER MOVE ON

Put this book on a shelf – but not its message.

*“The Spirit does not take his pupils beyond the cross
but ever more deeply into it.”*

- J. Knox Chamblin

I am a Christian because God showed me mercy, not because I was worthy or wanting to be saved.

I wasn't searching for God. God came looking for me.

As I listened, God revealed Himself and regenerated my heart. I believed, and repented.

The cross was for ME. Jesus was MY Savior.

It Really Is Enough:

NEVER let the cross slide into second or third place in your life.

NEVER lay the cross aside!

NEVER move on... NOTHING else is of equal importance.

The message of Christ and Him crucified is the Christian's hope, confidence, and assurance.

You've been saved to grow, to serve in a local church, to do good works, and to glorify God.

The Gospel isn't one class among many that you'll attend during your life as a Christian – the gospel is the whole building in which all the classes take place!

All the topics you'll study and focus on as a believer will be offered to you “within the walls” of the glorious gospel...

The Cross and the Old Testament:

Only the person who understands that the cross is the center of all human history can understand the O.T.

Through the lens of the gospel, the Bible truly becomes one book telling one story – the story of sinful man, a holy God, & His plan of salvation through the substitution of Himself for His people.

Everything in the O.T. points toward Jesus Christ and enriches our understanding of the cross.

The drama of redemption begins in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3 and continues to unfold throughout the O.T. until it reaches its climax at the cross.

They symbolism of the sacrificial system, the giving of the law, the repeated failure of man, and the steadfast faithfulness of God – all this and more deepens our amazement at the cross.

NOTE: “recommendation” = Graeme Goldworthy’s book entitled:
According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible

The Cross and the End-Times:

What we believe about Christ’s return is important... but His cross should stand at the center of any such discussion.

His second coming is the culminating victory He accomplished at the cross.

Jesus didn’t instruct His disciples to concern themselves with the details of when and where he would return.

The disciples were to watch and pray, but their primary preoccupation was to be exulting in and proclaiming the good news of His death and resurrection.

Because of the cross, history’s conclusion is already written:
Jesus is victorious, all who trust in Him have eternal life...
and Satan is defeated!

The Cross and Prayer:

Effective prayer is prayer saturated in the gospel.

To learn to pray you must become familiar with the Bible’s teaching on prayer.

All effective prayer is rooted in the cross.

The gospel is the starting point of prayer.

Without Christ's blood, you couldn't even approach God.

Students in the school of prayer never graduate from the school of the gospel.

The Cross and Holiness:

Only grace sustains lasting change and sanctification.

Through the cross we overcome not only the guilt of sin, but the power of sin as well.

The cross motivates us to be holy.

The Cross and Relationships:

Because of sin, relational conflict is inevitable.

You'll sin against others. They'll sin against you.

Your relationship with others must be based on your relationship to God through the cross.

We're commanded in Scripture: *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*

The cross transforms our perspective...

Through the cross I realize that no sin committed against me will ever be as serious as the innumerable sins that I have committed against God.

When we understand how much God has forgiven us, it's not difficult to forgive others.

God's been patient with me so I can be patient with others.

God has forgiven me so I can forgive others.

God's grace is changing me so that I can trust He can also change others.

The practical stuff (of life) flows out of the central (gospel) stuff (of life).

Better Than I Deserve:

I deserve God's wrath. Honestly, I deserve to be in hell.

But instead, I'm God's adopted child. I'm forgiven of my sins and I'm loved by Him! I'm going to heaven!

...I'm doing much better than I deserve!

This truth fills me with perspective and joy...

Understanding the gospel lets us marvel at God's love regardless of our circumstances.

I don't know what tomorrow holds, but I do know this: Because of the cross, I'll be doing much better than I deserve.

That's why... for the rest of my life, I want only to move deeper into the wonderful mystery of God's love for me.

The gospel isn't just for unbelievers... it's for Christians too!

**We're not only saved by grace,
but we also live by grace every day.**

*This is why the gospel is truly the main thing...
This is why it should ALWAYS BE at
the center of our lives.*

Remember: you don't need a new truth; you need to guard the ONE truth.