

“It is so easy to settle into our personalities and preferences and surrender to ‘that’s-just-the-way-I-am-and-I-can’t-change.’ But when we do, we find that the Spirit is constantly at work pointing out the gaps between this approach and all that the gospel calls us to be. *Both/And Ministry* not only points out the gaps we may have become blind to; it also energizes us for ongoing repentance and faith until the day when all of the gaps are gone for good.”

Nancy Guthrie, Bible teacher;  
Author, *Blessed and Even Better Than Eden*

“With a heart for those who exercise any kind of Christian ministry or leadership, Millar writes with compassion, encouragement and insight to guide his readers into the joy of both Jesus’ completed work for us and his continual work in us. *Both/And Ministry* does more than call out the error of the Christian ‘pendulum swing’ that constantly oscillates between two half-truths—it directs us into fullness of life in Christ.”

Kanishka Raffel, Archbishop of Sydney

“In a day of soundbites and hype, this book comes as a refreshing word of sanity. Gary Millar shows the multicoloured nature of Christian life and ministry, and refuses to allow it to become monochrome. He helps us grasp the different angles of Jesus’ teaching and resist the temptation to boil them down to just one thing. We all need ‘both/and’ ministry.”

Graham Beynon, Head of Local Ministries, FIEC UK

“It takes a particular talent to accomplish what Gary Millar has done in this characteristically clear and profoundly helpful book. With a lightness of touch he helps us understand the keys to living a life truly grounded in the gospel and pursuing a ministry genuinely shaped by that gospel.”

Alistair Begg, Bible Teacher at Truth For Life;  
Senior Pastor, Parkside Church, Cleveland, OH,  
Author, *Pray Big* and *Brave by Faith*

“Distinctly Christian integrity insists that we hold the ‘both/and’ concepts of our faith in a perpetual bear hug. With gracious wisdom and candid explanations, our friend Gary teaches us how to do just that. You’ll be both encouraged and challenged by this book.”

Gloria Furman, Author, *Treasuring Christ When Your Hands Are Full* and *The Pastor’s Wife*

“I absolutely love how gospel-centred this book is! As a result, it is both deeply humbling and wonderfully liberating at the same time. Read it to be refreshed and rejuvenated to serve Christ fervently again.”

Denesh Divyanathan, Senior Pastor, The Crossing Church,  
Singapore; Chairman, Evangelical College of Asia (Singapore)

“Christ is only our representative Savior. Or Christ is our example to follow. Why do these two have to be divided? My good friend Gary Millar challenges stalemates such as this with his usual pastoral and theological wisdom. This book should be read as widely as possible!”

Michael Horton, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic  
Theology and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary, CA

“A realistic and gracious book that helps you better understand God’s character, his work, and who you are—and that helps you better reconcile the paradox that although living as a Christian is difficult at times, it is a life full of joy. Gary Millar has written an immensely practical book that will bless many as they are convicted and comforted by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jane Tooher, Director of the Priscilla & Aquila Centre,  
Moore Theological College, Sydney

“In this warm and wise book, Gary Millar makes sense of the many apparent tensions of ministry and leadership, reminding us that as disciples of Christ, we are called to ‘a life that is marked by contrasts and paradoxes that reflect the glorious richness of our God and Saviour’. Gary helps us to recognise, navigate and value the many ‘both/and’ realities we encounter when we seek to live and lead like Jesus. A great personal or team read for facilitating reflection on ministry and growth in ministry.”

Jen Charteris, Executive Director, Crosslands Training



# Both / And

LIVING AND LEADING  
LIKE JESUS

# Ministry

GARY MILLAR

The logo features a stylized, curved line above the text 'thegoodbook'.  
thegoodbook  
COMPANY

Both/And Ministry: Living and Leading Like Jesus

© Gary Millar, 2025

Published by:  
The Good Book Company



[thegoodbook.com](http://thegoodbook.com) | [thegoodbook.co.uk](http://thegoodbook.co.uk)  
[thegoodbook.com.au](http://thegoodbook.com.au) | [thegoodbook.co.nz](http://thegoodbook.co.nz) | [thegoodbook.co.in](http://thegoodbook.co.in)

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible, Anglicised Edition, Copyright © 2024 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible and CSB are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

All rights reserved. Except as may be permitted by the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission from the publisher.

Gary Millar has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as author of this work.

Design by Drew McCall

ISBN: 9781802541267 | JOB-007938 | Printed in India

# Contents

Introduction	9
1. Both/And Theology	17
2. Both/And Identity	37
3. Both/And Relationships	55
4. Both/And Ministry	75
5. Both/And Leadership	95
6. Both/And Community	119
7. Why a Both/And Life Is Worth the Effort	135





## INTRODUCTION

# On Playing the Didgeridoo (and Living a Genuinely Gospel-Shaped Life)

**T**he secret to playing the didgeridoo—one of the classic instruments of the indigenous peoples of Australia—is, apparently, learning to breathe in and breathe out *at the same time*. Both of those actions are actually pretty simple. In fact, you could say that they come naturally! For our whole lives, we manage to breathe in and then breathe out and breathe in again with a reassuring regularity. But try to do them at the same time (I dare you!) and it's a very different matter.

I have now been a Christian for over 40 years, and I've come to the conclusion that living for the Lord Jesus is a bit like playing the didgeridoo. It's basically a matter of doing some pretty simple things *at the same time*. Things like learning to live confidently in Christ *and* mistrust our own sinfulness; or being urgent about gospel work *and* patient with people; or taking up our cross and denying ourselves daily *and* running to Jesus

to find rest for our souls. If we could separate these things out, focusing on one of them at a time, they would be relatively straightforward. The challenge is that we have to do these basic things all at the same time. Living the Christian life—this “both/and” kind of life—isn’t really all that complicated; it’s just hard!

That’s just as true when it comes to the particular focus of this book: doing gospel ministry. If you are part of the body of Christ, you are (or should be) involved in ministry at some level—by which I basically mean doing stuff at church. Whether it’s cleaning the toilets or writing Bible-study material, making Play-Doh models with the pre-schoolers or preaching on Habakkuk to the adults—it’s all ministry. But I suspect that the more responsibility in church life you have, the more important this book will feel—because the damage done by getting it wrong increases.

You see, when it comes to living and leading like Jesus, we don’t get to pick and choose which of his commands to follow. Being gifted in one area (say, preaching) doesn’t make up for being harsh or selfish towards your team. Gentleness is a beautiful trait, but it doesn’t get us off the hook when it comes to having difficult but necessary conversations with those we love for their good. Christian ministry is an all-embracing, both/and kind of thing. If we don’t take that seriously, sooner or later, it will lead to disaster.

Perhaps you’ve witnessed that type of disaster first-hand in the failure of a Christian leader. You might be aware of global figures. Or you may well know of other, less famous individuals whose downfall nonetheless

created havoc and disappointment in the local churches and ministries of which they were a part. The individual circumstances were different, but they all had this in common: the individual overlooked or ignored or excused themselves from living for Jesus in one or more key areas of the Christian life as described plainly in the Bible.

Of course, it shouldn't come as a shock to any of us that such "great ones" could sin. The repeated and dramatic failures of virtually every key figure in the Old Testament make it very clear that even the best of us are only a couple of steps away from sinning spectacularly. The whole Bible is full of blunt statements about our deep-rooted corruption (like Jeremiah 17:9 and Romans 3:23).

But what is surprising is that in almost every case of leadership failure, both the person themselves and many of those closest to them had somehow managed to excuse clearly sinful behaviour for a long time. Great giftedness—or great effectiveness—was valued over basic godliness. These leaders stopped doing some of the essentials—and the result was disaster.

And that's how it works for all of us; we're all called to live godly lives. Not many reading this book will have to demonstrate on the world stage that our words and lives match. Instead, we'll have to do it in the context of our families and our local church family—doing a range of simple things at the same time as we seek to serve Jesus together. This book is about doing just that. It's a book about living a genuinely gospel-shaped, Christ-like life for the rest of our lives.

### **A Gospel-Shaped Life Is a Christ-Like Life**

The most vivid picture we have of the both/and life is the life of the Lord Jesus.

God has given us four rich and nuanced accounts of the life of Jesus. Jesus lived with a poise and vibrancy that is unmatched in human history for he alone is God in the flesh. He was the one who always managed to speak the truth and to love those to whom he spoke; to be gentle and courageous; to be focused on the big picture and compassionate to the person in front of him. Jesus did the basics beautifully, all the time. He is the one who has done what we're talking about in this book perfectly.

But the marvellous thing is that he came both to model the gospel-shaped life and to put it within our reach.

In John's Gospel, Jesus makes the remarkable statement that he came so that we might have "life ... in abundance" (John 10:10). The full effect of his incarnation, flawless life, substitutionary death, stunning resurrection and ongoing rule and intercession is to make it possible for us to live *like him*. We need both the picture of this life and the ability to live it—and Jesus provides us with both.

It isn't simply the Gospels which focus on the life which we are enabled to live in Christ. The greater part of the rest of the New Testament was devoted to helping emerging Christian communities across the Mediterranean to live out God's calling. All of Paul's letters, for example, follow essentially the same pattern: the apostle lays out the basic contours of what God

has done for us in Christ (for example, Romans 1 – 8; Ephesians 1 – 3) and then moves on to describe a local expression of the gospel-shaped life (Romans 12 – 15; Ephesians 4 – 6). This gospel-shaped life is what this book is all about.

It is written for people, like me, who feel the weight of having to live a joined-up life—of living in a way in which our words and actions match. It's written for people like me who find it hard to do the simple things well, day after day. It's written for people, like me,, who would much prefer to focus on what comes easily to us and forget about the things we find challenging. It's written for people, like me, who want to live like Jesus and know that we need all the help we can get.

As I started to write, I was thinking about those who, like me, have the privilege of being paid to serve the church of the Lord Jesus. But as I got started, I realised that we all face the same basic challenges. So this book is written both for those who usually stand at the front and those who prefer to serve in the background.

If you've ever felt frustrated by your apparent inability to do the simple things that you encourage other people to do, this book is for you. If you've ever stood in front of a group of Christians feeling that you're about to be crushed by the weight of your own hypocrisy, welcome. If you ever feel tempted to justify your weakness (or sin!) in one area by saying, "But at least I do so much better over here", read on. If you find yourself with a great capacity to forget even the most obvious things, then I've written this book to point you once again to the help that God himself has already provided.

This book aims to help you avoid the danger of settling for less than what God offers. It's written to help you spot where you have made bad choices, excused yourself and opted out of an authentically gospel-shaped life. It's an encouragement to pursue the beautiful, Christ-like, Spirit-empowered life of repentance and faith that God has called you to—a life that isn't complicated but is hard. A life that is marked by contrasts and paradoxes that reflect the glorious richness of our God and Saviour.

Most mornings, I read a Puritan-inspired prayer from a collection entitled *The Valley of Vision*. As I was thinking about this whole idea of the often paradoxical both/and life, I reached the end of the book and started again as usual. As I read the very first prayer in the book, this is what I found: I'd invite you to pray this with me as we start our journey together.

*Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly,  
Thou has brought me to the valley of vision,  
where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights;  
hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory.*

*Let me learn by paradox  
that the way down is the way up,  
that to be low is to be high,  
that the broken heart is the healed heart,  
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,  
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,  
that to have nothing is to possess all,  
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,  
that to give is to receive, that the valley is the place of  
vision.*

*Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells,  
and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine;  
Let me find Thy light in my darkness,  
Thy life in my death,  
Thy joy in my sorrow,  
Thy grace in my sin,  
Thy riches in my poverty  
Thy glory in my valley.<sup>1</sup>*

---

1 Ed. Arthur Bennett, *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions* (Banner of Truth, 1988)