GOSPEL SHAPED

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Handbook





GOSPEL SHAPED

LIVING

Vermon Pierre







Gospel Shaped Living Handbook

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CONTENTS

SERIES PREFACE	7
NTRODUCTION	9
IOW TO USE GOSPEL SHAPED LIVING	11
ESSIONS	
SESSION 1: YOUR CHURCH: A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS	13
SESSION 2: A UNITED CHURCH IN A DIVIDED WORLD	33
SESSION 3: A SERVING CHURCH IN A SELFISH WORLD	53
SESSION 4: A GENEROUS CHURCH IN A STINGY WORLD	73
SESSION 5: A TRUTHFUL CHURCH IN A CONFUSED WORLD	93
SESSION 6: A JOYFUL CHURCH IN A SUFFERING WORLD	13
SESSION 7: HOW TO BE THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD 1:	33



GROWING A GOSPEL SHAPED CHURCH

The Gospel Coalition is a group of pastors and churches in the Reformed heritage who delight in the truth and power of the gospel, and who want the gospel of Christ crucified and resurrected to lie at the center of all we cherish, preach and teach.

We want churches called into existence by the gospel to be shaped by the gospel in their everyday life.

Through our fellowship, conferences, and online and printed media, we have sought to encourage pastors and church leaders to calibrate their lives around what is of first importance—the gospel of Christ. In these resources, we want to provide those same pastors with the tools to excite and equip church members with this mindset.

In our foundation documents, we identified five areas that should mark the lives of believers in a local fellowship:

- 1. Empowered corporate worship
- 2. Evangelistic effectiveness
- 3. Counter-cultural community
- 4. The integration of faith and work
- **5.** The doing of justice and mercy

We believe that a church utterly committed to winsome and theologically substantial expository preaching, and that lives out the gospel in these areas, will display its commitment to dynamic evangelism, apologetics, and church planting. These gospel-shaped churches will emphasize repentance, personal renewal, holiness, and the wonderful life of the church as the body of Christ. At the same time, there will be engagement with the social structures of ordinary people, and cultural engagement with art, business, scholarship and government. The church will be characterized by firm devotion to the truth on the one hand, and by transparent compassion on the other.

The Gospel Coalition believes in the priority of the local church, and that the local church is the best place to discuss these five ministry drivers and decide how to integrate them into life and mission. So, while being clear on the biblical principles, these resources give space to consider what a genuine expression of a gospel-shaped

church looks like for you in the place where God has put you, and with the people he has gathered into fellowship with you.

Through formal teaching sessions, daily Bible devotionals, group Bible studies and the regular preaching ministry, it is our hope and prayer that congregations will grow into maturity, and so honor and glorify our great God and Savior.



Don Carson President

Tim Keller Vice President

+ Anhenon

Trolly ! Keller



We have become used to a lot of things today—things we have come to accept as a normal part of living in our world.

We accept that conflict is just a part of daily life; and we accept that conflict between people will inevitably lead to division and dysfunction. We accept that people will be motivated by selfishness, and make choices based on their needs before considering the needs of others. We accept that people will tell lies and distort the truth to their own advantage. We accept that life will be a struggle, and will end in suffering and death. We have accepted that nasty is normal.

Yet at the same time, everyone instinctively senses that this is *just not right*. That life doesn't have to be this way; that things ought to be different. This may be normal life, but it isn't optimal life.

Christians are people who have discovered that something incredible has happened—something that broke through the walls built up around what we're used to and what our world accepts as normal. This "something" is that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. And because he rose, everything is different. Change, forgiveness and new life are now possible. A crack of light has broken into the darkness of the world. Division, dysfunction, selfishness and death do not have to be the final answer. Rather, by faith in Christ, we can now live the life of Christ.

And when Christians who are gathered together as the church live out this life within the world, they become a truly "counter-cultural community"—a community that still lives within the culture, but now shines with the light of a new culture, one shaped by and grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Coalition has included this statement in their Theological Vision for Ministry, entitled "Counter-cultural community." It begins:

Because the gospel removes both fear and pride, people should get along inside the church who could never get along outside. Because it points us to a man who died for his enemies, the gospel creates relationships of service rather than of selfishness. Because the gospel calls us to holiness, the people of God live in loving bonds of mutual accountability and discipline. Thus the gospel creates a human community radically different from any society around it.¹

¹ You can read the full text of the statement on page 158

In this curriculum we will think through what it means for a church to be a countercultural community within the world. We won't do that by thinking primarily about culture, style or gimmicks—but about the gospel. We will see some of the principal ways in which a church that is being shaped by the gospel will live in stark contrast to the world around us; and how this will set it both at odds with its society, and yet also be strangely attractive to those in that society.

For example, what does it mean for the church to show unity in contrast to worldly divisions? What impact will it have when a self-centered world sees a church community that is full of sacrificial love and generosity? How can Christians hold to and speak out about truth in a way that is loving?

You might be unsettled as you work through this material and see significant areas where you and your church are still too much like the world, or too distant from the world. Don't give up or try to avoid what the Lord needs to reveal within you and your church. Instead, prayerfully work through these sessions with the happy and humble confidence that God wants to fill you even more with "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Trust that as this happens, many of the people you know and interact with day by day will begin to walk away from the darkness of sin and be drawn toward the light of the gospel.



Vermon Pierre





HOW TO USE GOSPEL SHAPED LIVING



MAIN TEACHING SESSION This session combines watching short talks on a DVD or listening to "live" talks with times for discussion. These prompt you to think about what you have heard and how it might apply to your church and cultural context. Bear in mind that there is not necessarily a "right answer" to every question!



DEVOTIONALS Each session comes with six daily personal devotionals. These look at passages that are linked to the theme of the Main Teaching Session, and are for you to read and meditate on at home through the week after the session. You may like to do them in addition to or instead of your usual daily devotionals, or use them to begin such a practice.



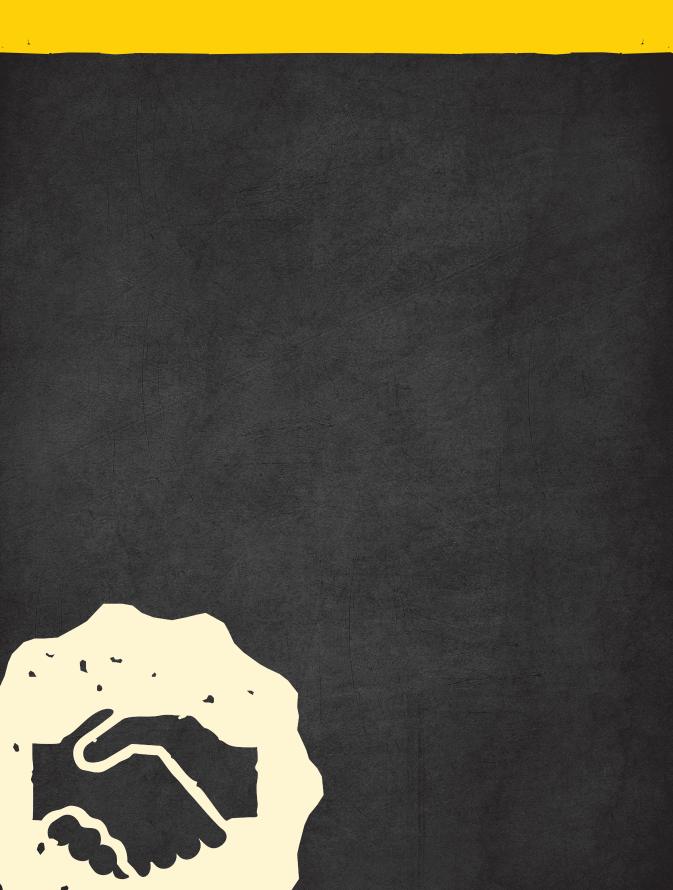
JOURNAL As you reflect on what you have learned as a group and in your personal devotionals, use this page to record the main truths that have struck you, things you need to pray about, and issues you'd like to discuss further or questions you'd like to ask.



BIBLE STUDY As part of this curriculum, your church may be running weekly Bible Studies as well as the Main Teaching Sessions. These look more closely at a passage and help you focus on an aspect of the Main Teaching Session. If your church is not using this part of the curriculum, you could work through it on your own or with another church member.



SERMON NOTES Your church's preaching program may be following this curriculum; space has been provided for you to make notes on these sermons in your Handbook.



SESSION 1:

YOUR CHURCH: ALLIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH, THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT VIEWS OF WHAT A CHURCH ACTUALLY IS. IN THIS INTRODUCTORY SESSION, YOU'LL DISCOVER HOW GOD'S CHURCH IS MADE UP OF UNIQUE PEOPLE, WITH A UNIQUE PURPOSE. AND YOU'LL BEGIN TO SEE WHY GOD HAS PUT YOU IN YOUR CHURCH, AND WHY HE HAS PUT YOUR CHURCH WHERE HE HAS.



What do peop	ale who do	n't ao to	church th	nink of C	`hristians a	nd the c	hurch?	
what do peop	ne willo do	ii t go to i	CHUICH II	IIIIK OI C	illistialis a	na the c	iluicii:	
ATCH DVD 1	1 OR LIS	STEN TO	TALK	1.1				

Discu	
How d	lo people treat the church as consumers? Do you ever find yourself doing this
	unhelpful things does this lead to? What are people missing out on who treat
their C	Christian faith in this way?
of the	nurch isn't just a community of Christians. It doesn't exist purely for the sake people who are in it. Instead, Jesus said that Christians are to stand out—to " in a dark world:
MATTH	EW 5:14-16
people to all i	are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do e light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light n the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that hay see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.
la lass	ıs' view of the local church bigger than yours? How?

	deuss /e are a unique people:
	Born again
	Adopted into a new family
	We have moved from light to darkness
	A new creation
	Having eternal life
Tł	ne Bible uses these pictures, among others, to show how we become different when e respond to the gospel. Which of these descriptions excites you most? Why?

(the "darkness")?			
ATCH DVD 19	OR LICTEN TO TA	11/19	
ATCH DVD 1.3	OR LISTEN TO TA	LK 1.3	

Discuss

When Christians talk about being different than the world, they often focus on the things they do not do—getting drunk, watching porn on TV, stealing stationery from work, etc. What is the downside of this approach to thinking about our distinctiveness as believers?
How would you describe Christian distinctiveness positively, but not proudly?

Pray

This curriculum looks at the qualities and character that should mark our lives as we grow as believers.

Pray that as you all work through this curriculum, you will understand more deeply who we have been made in Christ, and that you will reflect this as a church family.

Pray that you will grow in the qualities listed above and, as a result, shine more brightly in the world around you.



This week we'll look at 1 Peter 2:9-10, where the apostle Peter reaches back into the Old Testament to present us with a breathtaking description of who your church is.

Day 1

1 PETER 2:9; DEUTERONOMY 7:6-11

"You are a chosen race."

In Deuteronomy 7, God is speaking through Moses to the nation of Israel as they stand on the verge of the promised land.

: What did God choose Israel to be (v 6)?

What wasn't the reason for his choice (v 7)? What was the reason (v 8)?

And as Peter writes to first-century people from a great variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds who have come to faith in Christ, he says: *This describes you*. Each local church is a gathering of God's chosen race; it is an expression of a new humanity that undercuts and supersedes all other allegiances.

And because, like Israel, we are selected not because of our performance, but because of God's promise, there is never any room for pride, nor need for anxiety; instead we live in humble confidence. We owe all we are and all we have to God's choice to love us; but we know that God has chosen to love us.

PRAY: Almighty God, thank you that you love your people because you have chosen to, not because of our successes or failures. Give us a sense of humble confidence.

Day 2

1 PETER 2:9; EXODUS 19:1-6

"You shall be ... a kingdom of priests."

Within the kingdom of Israel, priests were to speak to God about the people, and talk to the people about God. Within the world, the role of this kingdom of priests—all Israel—was to pray to God for the salvation of the nations, and to talk to the nations about the saving God.

Now Peter says to the church: You are this kingdom. The job of King is taken—given by God to his Son, Jesus. The job of priests has been graciously given by God to... you and me. This is a weighty privilege. Priests represent God; therefore they will either promote or profane him. Read Ezekiel 36:16-22. Israel lurched between looking down on the nations and living just like the nations, but failed to show and speak of their God to the nations. Let the same not be said of us.

O: How might you, or your church, profane God in the way Israel did?

Q: What will it mean for you to be a priest, under the rule of King Jesus, today?

PRAY: Jesus, thank you for bringing me into your kingdom. Please show me how I can promote you, and reveal to me where I am in danger of profaning you.

Day 3

1 PETER 2:9; EXODUS 19:1-6

"You are ... a holy nation."

Q: Read 1 Peter 1:14-17. How do we know what it means to "be holy"?

Q: How does knowing holiness is Godlikeness motivate us to pursue it?

Israel at Sinai (and the church today) is told to live, first and foremost, gazing upwards. We know there is a Judge of all, and yet we also know we call him Father (v 17). So we are to seek to grow in the likeness of our new family. And as we pursue holiness, we will be rejecting the ways of a world that seeks to be like God in authority, rather than like him in character. To be called to be holy is to be called to be different. The church will never find this easy; but it is intrinsic to our identity.

And yet, Israel at Sinai (and the church today) is called to live looking outwards, too. We are a nation in a world of nations. We are to learn to live among them in a way that makes our holy God real and wonderful to them. The church is called to be holy in a way that is invitational, not intimidating; embracing, not excluding. There is a border between the world and the church, and it is to be marked by holiness; and yet there should be no barriers or guards erected on the church's side of the border. The gospel is for all.

Is your church better at looking up, or out? How can you do both, better?

PRAY: Pray that your church will never forget to be holy, or to be active in the world.

Day 4

1 PETER 2:9; DEUTERONOMY 26:16-19

"You are ... a people for his own possession."

: How does God see Israel (v 18)?

📭 What will this mean for them (v 19)?

If you are familiar with the Old Testament, it is very easy to miss one of the most astonishing facts about it—from Genesis 12 onwards, its focus rests almost entirely on a single family, a nation nestled on the east of the Mediterranean Sea. God cares so deeply about, and invests his reputation so irreversibly in, the people of Israel that the story of his word is the story of this people.

Why? Because they are "his treasured possession." He owns and loves the world; but he *treasures* Israel. Imagine that: to live each day knowing that your nation is a treasure in the eyes of the Maker and Sustainer of every atom in existence and every hour of our lives.

Actually, you do not need to imagine—Peter looks at the church as he says: You are a people for his own possession. God brought us to himself through Christ so that he could treasure us. We could not be more loved, or looked out for, than we already are.

: How can this change our thinking when we feel failures? Exhausted? Successful?

How does your attitude toward your church compare with God's?

PRAY: Thank God for treasuring your church.

Day 5

1 PETER 2:10; HOSEA 1:2-11

"Now you are God's people."

We have seen some awesome descriptions of Israel. But there was a problem. All of God's commitments to the people were conditional on their faithfulness and obedience to him. And throughout their history Israel would not, could not, keep those conditions.

Q: How does God describe his people?

Hosea 1:2
 1:8-9

Q: But what does God promise (v 10)?

God said to Israel: You are not my people—no longer a chosen race, or kingdom of priests, a holy nation, my treasured possession. But God also said in Israel: You are my people, and I offer you all these blessings once more (v 10). He did this when the only member of Israel to live a life of perfect, faithful obedience was forsaken by God—when the Lord Jesus, in his death, gave up all his privileges to bear the failings of God's people.

And so God now offers all people, everywhere, a place in his people, his church. And the wonder is that that entry is no longer conditional, but relational. It is available simply by appointing the perfect Israelite as our "head" (Hosea 1:11) and enjoying all the privileges that belong to him.

O: When was the last time you stopped to appreciate the chasm between what you deserve and what you have been given?

PRAY: Almighty God, impress upon my heart what it cost to make us your people.

Day 6

1 PETER 2:9-10

These verses are almost all about what God has done for us in Christ, and about what his church is. There is only one mention of anything that we do...

Q: God did all this for us "that you may..." what (v 9)?

Why would doing this be a natural outworking of knowing:

what the church is?

 what we were before we received mercy?

Why does your church exist, where it is, in the time that it does, with the members it contains? Because God has placed it there, not to hold him tight so much as to hold him out. In all that we do, we are to show and share how excellent he is. A church should never point to itself or wag its finger at others. Rather, it should beckon all around to share the glories of being God's beloved people, with all that entails eternally. And we do this not because we have to, but because we want to; because it is who we are, and why we're here.

O: Meditate on each description of the church we have enjoyed this week.

How has each one excited you about your faith, and your church?

How has each one challenged you about your place in your church, and your church's life together?

PRAY: Turn each phrase of these verses into a prayer of thanks to God.



hat I've le	arned or been particula	rly struck by th	nis week	
hat I want	to change in my perspe	ectives or action	ons as a result of this	week
nings I wou	ıld like to think about m	ore or discuss	s with others at m <mark>y c</mark>	hurch



Discuss

Christians are called to be different. But we have often thought about our difference as being defined by the things we do *not* do. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?

Part

READ LUKE 5:27-32

³¹ And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Tax collectors were hated by the Jews, as they were regarded as collaborators with the occupying Roman forces.

1. What is remarkable about what Jesus says and who he says it to?

What is remarkable about Levi's response?	
What would it have cost Levi to follow Jesus?	

3.	How do the Pharisees and teachers of the law respond (v 30)? What is behind their complaint, do you think?
Tł	 Legalistic: They think that they get right with God by being obedient to the detailed laws of God—not by God's forgiving grace. Separatist: They believe that they must completely separate themselves from sinful people if they are to remain "pure." Elitist: They adopt a superior attitude toward "sinners," believing them to be or less value than themselves.
4.	How does Jesus' response in verses 31-32 show them both who he is, and what he has come to do? How does his reply attack each of the three attitudes above?
5.	How can we as a church fall into the same trap as the Pharisees and teachers of the law?
6.	How does Levi illustrate what our own focus should be in the Christian life?

	e "tax collector treating them		-		_	we
How can we	e be more welco ke Levi?	oming to then	n, like Jesus,	and more o	pen to end	courag-
When do yo	RSELF: How a bu think you are bliness, and the bid this?	e most in dang	er of becom	ing a Pharis	ee in relati	on to
they are sick	R CHURCH: H c and need a do ome more of a	octor? How m	ight it feel lil			

Pray

FOR YOUR GROUP: Pray that you would grow as lights in the darkness as you work through this course together. Pray that the Lord would show you ways that you need to change and grow—and that he would give you the grace to do so.

FOR YOUR CHURCH: As your church embarks on this series examining what it means to be a shining light in the world, pray that you would grow together in seeing more clearly the light of the world—the Lord Jesus Christ—so that you will shine with his light in the darkness.



Bible passage:	Date:	