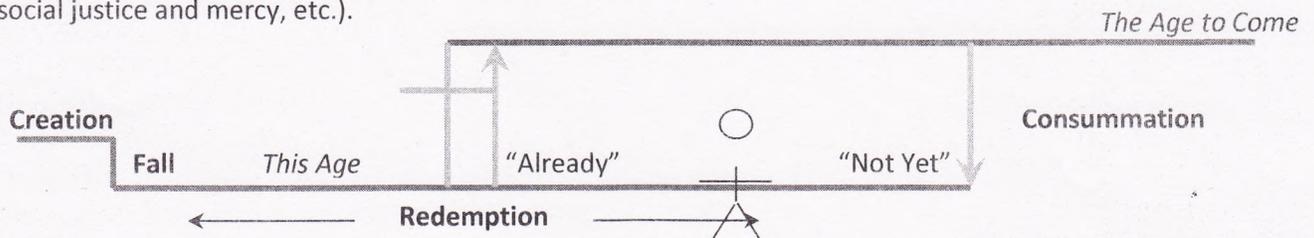


Our hope as we believe the gospel (the way of salvation) is that the story of our lives become meaningfully integrated into the larger story of redemption (the history of salvation).

Our lives can be viewed as stories. Think of reading a book. When you are half-way through, you know certain things about the characters, and you know events that have happened. The future events that you will read are meaningfully related to what you've read (if it is a good story). Yet books also have a larger meaning or message that they often want to convey through the telling of the story.

Our hope as Christians is that the story of our lives will gain their larger meaning and message from the larger story of God's redemption. This can be seen in the concept of "the already" and the "not yet" (Rom. 8). Our lives are caught between what Christ has already done in the cross and what He has yet to do in His return. This can be dramatically seen in the book of Colossians. In the first two chapters, Paul teaches us about the supremacy and sufficiency of who Christ is and what He has done for us. Yet in Col. 3, he begins "since then..." He gives us a way of living that is directly informed by who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

The goal of the gospel is transformation. We are personally transformed (heart, mind, hands) with a view towards Christians being involved in their cities to effect a cultural transformation (business, the arts, social justice and mercy, etc.).



Discussion Question – In your experience, what's the difference between a ministry that is gospel-proclaiming and one that is actually gospel-centered?

II. THE GOSPEL MUST BE TIED TO THE BIBLE'S STORY LINE AND THEMES

HOME/ EXILE: RELATED THEMES Rest and Sabbath. Sin has left us restless. How can we enter God's rest? Justice and Shalom. The fabric of the world is broken. How can we restore shalom? Trinity and Community. We were made for personal and interdependent community with God and his people because we reflect the triune God. How can we become part of this community (Keller, Timothy J. (2012-09-04). *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Kindle Locations 913-917). Zondervan. Kindle Edition)?

YAHWEH/ COVENANT: RELATED THEMES Righteousness and Nakedness. We experience shame and guilt. How can our sins be covered? Marriage and Faithfulness. We long for true love and closure. How can we find it? Presence and Sanctuary. We are made to flourish in the presence of God. How can we stand in it (Keller, Timothy J. (2012-09-04). *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Kindle Locations 934-937). Zondervan. Kindle Edition)?

KINGDOM: RELATED THEMES Image and Likeness. Loving God supremely is the only way to truly love anything else and become your true self, to become truly free (2 Cor 4: 4; Col 1: 15). Idolatry and Freedom. Serving God supremely is the only way to freedom. Wisdom and the Word. Submission to the Word of God is the way to wisdom (Keller, Timothy J. (2012-09-04). *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Kindle Locations 964-967). Zondervan. Kindle Edition).

Summary: It is Jesus that makes all these stories *one* story. Only when we understand all the previous stories and pointers (types) do we realize the richness and fullness of who Christ is. But on the other hand, only when we understand him (anti-type) do we understand what the pointers and all the other stories were about. We cannot fully understand one without the other. So for example, when in John 3 Jesus says he is like the serpent lifted up in the wilderness he puts the Serpent-in-the-wilderness *into the Big Story*. Yes, the purpose of the comparison is that the serpent incident sheds light on how Jesus saves us (e.g. it only takes a look, he is made like and treated like the sin that is killing us, etc.)--but on the other hand it means that we can't understand the incident of the serpent without realizing that it points us to Christ. Jesus shows us that the Bible is not an interesting set of isolated stories, each story telling us something different about how to live. Rather, Jesus unifies all the chapters into one story.

"There are great stories in the Bible...but it is possible to know Bible stories, yet miss the Bible story...The Bible has a story line. It traces an unfolding drama. The story follows the history of Israel, but it does not begin there, nor does it contain what you would expect in a national history....If we forget the story line...we cut the heart out of the Bible. Sunday school stories are then told as tamer versions of the Sunday comics, where Samson substitutes for Superman. David...becomes a Hebrew version of Jack the Giant Killer. No, David is not a brave little boy who isn't afraid of the big bad giant. He is the Lord's anointed...God chose David as a king after his own heart in order to prepare the way for David's great Son, our Deliverer and Champion..".

- E. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*

Discussion Question – Choose one or more of these themes and share how it could shape your ministry.

III. The power of the gospel comes in two movements. It first says, "I am more sinful and flawed than I ever dared believe," but then quickly follows with, "I am more accepted and loved than I ever dared hope." The former outflanks antinomianism, while the latter staves off legalism. One of the greatest challenges is to be vigilant in both directions at once. Whenever we find ourselves fighting against one of these errors, it is extraordinarily easy to combat it by slipping into the other. Here's a test: if you think one of these errors is much more dangerous than the other, you are probably partially participating in the one you fear less. Unlike legalism or antinomianism, an authentic grasp of the gospel of Christ will bring increasing transformation and wholeness across all the dimensions of life that were marred by the fall. By removing the primary cause of all of our alienations — our separation from God — it also treats the alienations that flow from it. The gospel addresses our greatest need and brings change and transformation to every area of life. Let's look at just a few of the ways that the gospel changes us (Keller, Timothy J. (2012-09-04). *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Kindle Locations 1098-1106). Zondervan. Kindle Edition).

Discussion Question from chapter 3: Keller writes, "The gospel addresses our greatest need and brings change and transformation to every area of life." The gospel also treats the alienations that flow from our alienation from God. Rehearse, in your own words, how the gospel treats at least three of the following areas: discouragement and depression, love and relationships, sexuality, family and parental expectations, self-control, racial and cultural differences, our motive for witness, obedience to human authority, guilt and self-image, joy and humor, our attitudes toward class.