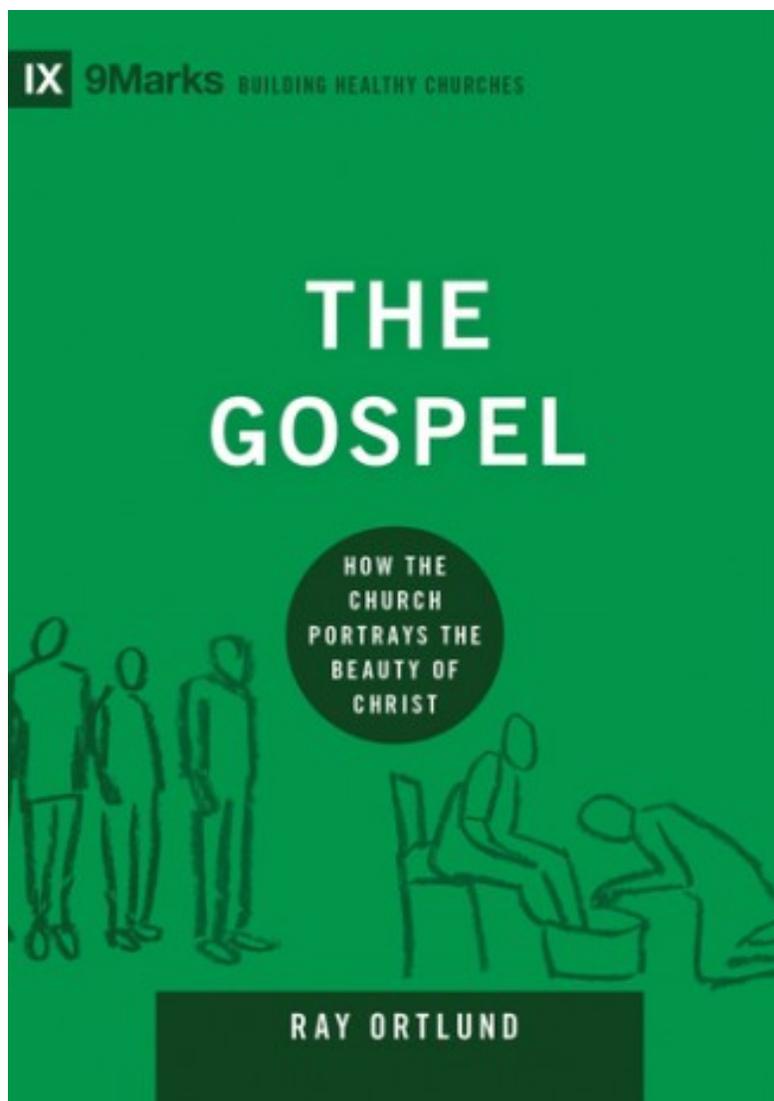


# Growth Group Study Guide

based on Ray Ortlund's  
*The Gospel: How the Church Portrays  
the Beauty of Christ*



# Introduction

As a church, we always want to be explicitly clear about the gospel. In everything we say, sing, preach, pray, and proclaim, we want the gospel of Jesus Christ to be perfectly clear to every hearer. But not only do we want the gospel to be clearly understood; we also want it to be clearly perceived. We want the gospel to be obviously manifested among us: in our relationships and in all of our interactions. We want to hold fast to our confession of faith and simultaneously to hold out a picture of what that belief looks like in action. We want, as Ray Ortlund so pointedly states it, our adherence to gospel doctrine to create gospel culture among us.

In essence, that's the entire goal of this study. We want to hammer home the main idea of this little book, the idea that, "*Gospel doctrine creates gospel culture.*" If every member of our church walks away with that simple phrase deeply engrained in their minds, we consider this to be a fruitful endeavor. Once that concept is grasped, we can build upon it (on both the doctrine and culture sides of the equation). And ground zero for this work, at least at CFC, is our Growth Groups. While gospel doctrine is explicitly proclaimed from the pulpit on Sundays (and reinforced in various ways and places, including our Growth Groups), we believe that the gospel culture is built after we sing the "Doxology" and folks strike up conversations with one another. We believe that gospel culture is built as we share painful prayer requests with one another in each others' living rooms on Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday nights. We believe that gospel culture is built over coffee, through the discipling relationships in which we have the space to honestly and humbly confess our failures, bear others' burdens, and share others' joys. So that's the expressed goal of this study: to grow a deeper gospel culture in our church, in your own growth group.

To help you work through this study unto the intended ends of this study, here are a few notes about this study guide. First of all, we've supplied a schedule for you. Try, as best as you can, to stick to it. There will be insufficient space for some of these key ideas to seep into everyone's hearts if you have to combine 2-3 weeks of study together. While the reading is relatively short for each session, we don't recommend trying to combine sessions. However, we don't want it to go on too long either. So, as much as you are able, try to stick with the schedule (on page 4).

Next, you'll begin to notice that, essentially, each chapter of this book is a study of a passage of Scripture through the lenses of these ideas of gospel doctrine and gospel culture. As a result, this effectively causes a large portion of your discussion to revolve directly around Scripture. And that is a good thing. So as you prepare for and lead discussions for each meeting, strive to continually bring the Biblical passage upon which the chapter is based into the fore of the discussion. This helps to enforce that these ideas are not just Ray Ortlund's idea, or 9Marks ideas, but God's ideas.

Another way that we have attempted to help you through this study is by highlighting important ideas from the reading at the beginning of each session. Sometimes these are simply sentences. Sometimes these are paragraphs. These are some of the main truths that we hope to stick

in a reader's mind. As John Piper has said, "Books don't change peoples lives. Sentences do." As a result, the hope is to reinforce these important ideas in your discussion. So feel free to bat those thoughts around before jumping right into the questions. Or, you might choose to jump right into the questions and reference the main ideas as you go.

Of course, your discussion times need not be constrained to the content of these discussion guides. The questions are simply there to help you highlight some of the more important ideas and themes from the book. I always recommend asking the open-ended question at the end of the session, "Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful that we have not yet discussed?" Your group may bring much better thoughts into the discussion than this guide ever could. That's great, even ideal. So use this as a resource, as a template, but also take your own insights and insights from your group members and run with those. Also, in addition to the questions listed in every session, you may want to make use of the Supplementary Application Questions given on page 5 of this document.

Finally, we have some suggestions for Prayer Time to wrap up your session. You can take or leave the suggestions as you see fit, but we do recommend that you spend some time after each discussion in concentrated prayer asking the Lord to take the truths discussed and plant them deep in one another's hearts.

# Schedule

Session 1 - Foreword, Introduction, & Chapter 1

Session 2 - Chapters 2 & 3

Session 3 - Chapter 4

Session 4 - Chapter 5

Session 5 - Chapter 6

Session 6 - Chapter 7

## Supplementary Application Questions<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the questions listed in each session, these broad questions may be of use to you. Particularly if a person brings up a truth from the book that is not highlighted in the discussion guide, you might use these questions to further drive discussion into application.

- How can I apply this?
- Why have I not applied this better in the past?
- If I were to apply this, what changes would it require in my attitude or behavior?
- What aspect of God's character requires that I apply this truth to my life?
- What would be the long-term and far-reaching effects of applying this truth to my life?
- Can you think of an example from Jesus' life of how He applied this truth?
- Who do you know that applies this truth consistently?

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<sup>1</sup> These questions are taken from Bob McNabb's book *Spiritual Multiplication in the Real World*. See Appendix 2, "Questions to Aid in Meditation" on page 225 of that book.

# Session 1 - Foreword, Introduction, & Chapter 1

**Important Idea:** "The test of a gospel-centered church is its doctrine on paper *plus* its culture in practice." (18)

**Important Idea:** "Gospel doctrine creates a gospel culture. The doctrine of grace creates a culture of grace." (21)

## Questions for Discussion

- In the Foreword, J.I. Packer makes this statement: "It seems beyond question that we believers do not think often enough, or hard enough, about the culture of our congregations." (13) Before beginning this book, had you ever thought much about the culture of Christ Fellowship Church? Why is that an important exercise?

- Speak to the question that Ortlund asks on page 16: "If a message so good [as the gospel] lies at the defining center of our churches, why do we see such bad things in those same churches—ranging from active strife to sheer exhaustion?"

- In your own understanding, what does it mean to be a gospel-centered church?

- Ortlund says, "Let's not assume that our churches are faithful to the gospel. Let's examine whether they are. After all, 'Every institution tends to produce its opposite.'" (17)

-What would it look like in our church if we produced the opposite of what we are striving after? Specifically, what would it look like if we were the opposite of a "Worshipping and Witnessing Community"?

- Ortlund quotes Francis Schaeffer on page 21: "By the grace of God, therefore, the church must be known simultaneously for its purity of doctrine and the reality of its community."

-In your estimation, which one are we better at? Does one outshine the other at CFC?

-Since we all tend to lean toward emphasizing one over the other, which one do you personally tend to emphasize? Doctrine or culture?

-Do we believe that gospel culture is as essential to authentic Christianity as the truth of gospel doctrine?

- How did the equations on page 23 strike you?

Gospel doctrine - gospel culture = hypocrisy

Gospel culture - gospel doctrine = fragility

Gospel doctrine + gospel culture = power

- As it pertains to gospel culture, Ortlund quotes author Anne Rice, who said, "Christians have lost credibility in America as people who know how to love." Then, he goes on to suggest that "few things are more urgent for us than to regain credibility as people who know how to love, for Jesus' sake, so that his glorious gospel is unmistakably clear in our churches." (23)

-Would an unbeliever make such a statement about the way you generally treat people? Or would an outsider make Anne Rice's statement about our church?

- Have you thought this deeply about John 3:16 (a verse you likely know by heart)? What struck you about the profundity of the gospel in this study of John 3:16? Take it section by section.

-What struck you in the section "For God So Loved the World" (pp. 24-29)?

-What struck you in the section "That He Gave His Only Son" (pp. 30-32)?

-What struck you in the section "That Whoever Believes Won't Perish But Have Life" (pp. 33-36)?

- How does a deeper understanding of John 3:16 transform the meaning of 1 John 4:11 ("Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.")? In other words, how does a deeper grasp of gospel doctrine more deeply impact gospel culture?

- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

### **Prayer Time**

- Spend time praying through some of the key ideas that were discussed in the session.
- You may also find it helpful to distill the key Scripture passage (John 3:16) from the chapter down into a few points and pray for a greater understanding or a deeper application of those truths in our lives.
- Finally, pray toward the ultimate goal of Christ Fellowship Church being a place that holds fast to gospel doctrine and holds out the beauty of a gospel culture to all who come in contact with us.

## Session 2 - Chapters 2 & 3

**Important Idea:** “Gospel doctrine and gospel culture do not coexist by lucky chance, The doctrine creates and sustains the culture. The way we live together in our churches grows out of what we believe together.” (39)

**Important Idea:** “Scripture is clear. Christians have to choose between isolation, which is easy, and belonging, which is costly—and much more satisfying.” (41)

### Questions for Discussion

- The first three chapters of this book survey the gospel message at 3 levels. Whereas chapter 1 is about how the gospel transforms us as individuals, chapter 2 is about how the gospel creates and transforms the church, and chapter 3 is about how the gospel transforms all of creation. So this is good news for ourselves, for the church, and for creation.

[This is not so much a question, but a quick synopsis to help people see the coherence between what Ortlund is doing in Chapters 1-3. If you have taken a week in between readings, it may be helpful to remind people of this connection.]

- We'll start with Ortlund's own question from page 41: “To whom do you submit? Every one of us should have a good answer to that.” In terms of the church, to whom do you understand that you are to submit?

*Hebrews 13:7, 17 - [7] Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. . . . [17] Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

Christ Fellowship Church Covenant - “We will submit to the leadership of elders who have been entrusted by God to serve and care for this body by teaching the Word of Christ to us and modeling the character of Christ before us.”

- Ortlund makes a couple of statements on page 41 that challenge the individualistic spirit that pervades much of American Christianity. He says, “Scripture is clear. Christians have to choose between isolation, which is easy, and belonging, which is costly—and much more satisfying.” Also, “There is no churchless Christianity in the Bible.”

-How is such individualism antithetical to a thriving gospel culture? Moreover, how can gospel culture even adequately display itself without a church body in which to manifest itself?

- What struck you about God's love for the church in the treatment of Ephesians 5:25-27 (pp. 41-48)?
- Why is holiness such an important indicator of gospel culture?
- Moving into chapter 3, Ortlund says, "Gospel doctrine creates gospel cultures called churches, where wonderful things happen to unworthy people for the glory of Christ alone. But it doesn't end in our churches. A gospel-defined church is a prophetic sign that points beyond itself. It is a model home of the new neighborhood Christ is building for eternity."

-In light of this statement, how does God envision gospel culture to exist in our church even for the sake of those who aren't even in our church?

- What about the gospel doctrine drawn from Revelation 21:1-5 struck you in a new way?
- Ortlund says that the assurances of the promises of Revelation 21:1-5 ought to build in us a *cheerful defiance*.

-In what ways can such a cheerful defiance about trials in this life bolster our gospel witness to the world?

-Why is this cheerful defiance hard at times? Is that a gospel-doctrine issue, or simply part of being fragile human beings?

-Why is the church essential in helping us to maintain this cheerful defiance? Why do we need each other to help us hold fast to the "bright, resilient, rugged hope" that we have in the gospel?

- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

## Prayer Time

- Spend time praying through some of the key ideas that were discussed in the session.
- You may also find it helpful to distill the key Scripture passages (Ephesians 5:25-27 & Revelation 21:1-5) from the chapter down into a few points and pray for a greater understanding or a deeper application of those truths in our lives.
- Finally, pray toward the ultimate goal of Christ Fellowship Church being a place that holds fast to gospel doctrine and holds out the beauty of a gospel culture to all who come in contact with us.

## Session 3 - Chapter 4

**Important Idea:** “The gospel does not hang in midair as an abstraction. By the power of God, the gospel creates something new in the world today. It creates not just a new community, but a new *kind* of community. Gospel-centered churches are living proof that the good news is true, that Jesus is not a theory but is real, as he gives back to us our humanness. In its doctrine and culture, words and deeds, such a church makes visible the restored humanity only Christ can give.” (65)

**Important Idea:** “The household of God must offer a clear and lovely alternative to the madness of this world. In our churches, God calls us to reach for something better than what many of us have ever experienced.” (71)

**Important Idea:** “The family of God is where people should find lots of gospel, lots of safety, and lots of time.” (72)

### Questions for Discussion

- The key question of this chapter is embedded in 1 Timothy 3:14-16, the main Scripture passage of the chapter. And the question is simply this: How ought one to behave in the household of God? How are we to live and act among the people of our congregation?

- On pages 65-66, Ortlund gives us Francis Schaeffer’s proposal of the four things that should mark a gospel-centered church. They are: 1) sound doctrine, 2) honest answers to honest questions, 3) true spirituality, and 4) the beauty of human relationships. Then Ortlund goes on to say that it is the fourth, the beauty of human relationships, which is “the first thing that outsiders are likely to notice when they enter a church.”

-In your estimation, which of these four things are the most identifiable to outsiders looking in at our church?

-And personally, which of these do you need the most growth in?

- Ortlund says, “The beauty of human relationships in the church is itself an argument for the gospel.” Have you ever seen this to be true? Can you point to any real-life examples in your experience with our church that proves this statement.

- In light of 1 Timothy 3:15's description of the church as "the household of God," (i.e., the family of God), how regularly do you think about the church as your family (family in the profoundest sense, not some unimportant sense)?

- What was most striking to you about the anti-Beatitudes on page 71, and the anti-gospel culture that they create?

-Ortlund asks, "Don't these [anti-] 'Beatitudes' describe the world? But which of these two cultures, the kingdom of Christ or the kingdom of this world, more accurately describes your church?" How would you answer that?

- Ortlund proposes a simple equation as the answer for how we ought to behave in the household of God: gospel + safety + time.

-Gospel - "multiple exposures to the happy news of the gospel from one end of the Bible to the other"

-Safety - "the safety of non-accusing sympathy so that they can admit their problems honestly"

-Time - "enough time to rethink their lives at a deep level, because people are complex and changing is not easy"

-Talk about the implications for this. Why are all three of these necessary? And what's the ultimate aim of these three ingredients? ("The goal is not to make the church safe for sin; it's to make it safe for confession and repentance.")

- What does it mean that the church is "a pillar and buttress of the truth"? In particular, what does that mean in terms of gospel doctrine and gospel culture?

- "The power of the gospel creates something altogether different in the world today. It creates churches that, to borrow from John Piper, are God-exalting, Christ-admiring, Spirit-filled, Bible-enjoying, grace-preaching, convenience-defying, cross-embracing, risk-taking, selfishness-crucifying, gossip-silencing, prayer-saturated, future-thinking, outward-reaching, and beautifully human congregations where the undeserving can thrive. Only God can build this new kind of community. But when he does, it cannot be ignored." (77)

-Which of these descriptors resonates with you the most?

-Which of them do we need to grow in as a congregation?

- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

### **Prayer Time**

- Spend time praying through some of the key ideas that were discussed in the session.
- You may also find it helpful to distill the key Scripture passage (1 Timothy 3:14-16) from the chapter down into a few points and pray for a greater understanding or a deeper application of those truths in our lives.
- Finally, pray toward the ultimate goal of Christ Fellowship Church being a place that holds fast to gospel doctrine and holds out the beauty of a gospel culture to all who come in contact with us.

## Session 4 - Chapter 5

**Important Idea:** "A gospel culture is harder to lay hold of than gospel doctrine. It requires more relational wisdom and finesse. It involves stepping into a kind of community unlike anything we've experienced, where we happily live together on a love we can't create. A gospel culture requires us not to bank on our own importance or virtues, but to forsake self-assurance and exult together in Christ alone." (82)

**Important Idea:** "The primary barrier to displaying the beauty of Jesus in our churches come from the way we re-insert ourselves into that sacred center that belongs to him alone. Exalting ourselves always diminishes his visibility. That is why cultivating a gospel culture requires a profound, moment by moment 'unselfing' of every one of us. It is personally costly, even painful. What I am proposing throughout this book is not glib or shallow. So much is set against us, within and without. But the triumph of the gospel in our churches is still possible, as we look to Christ alone. He will help us." (83)

**Important Idea:** "It is possible for us to unsay by our practical church culture what we say in our official church doctrine." (88)

**Important Idea:** "It's not enough for us to ask, does our church teach gospel doctrine? We must also ask, is our church culture clearly aligned with that gospel doctrine? For Paul, faithfulness to the gospel includes *applying* the gospel to our conduct." (89)

### Questions for Discussion

- Ortlund argues that gospel doctrine is hard enough to remember in our hearts (because we're so forgetful). But how much more slippery will gospel culture be if we continually forget the gospel doctrine piece?

- Ortlund writes, "We should not assume that our church culture is true to Christ in every way. We should assume that it isn't in ways we haven't yet noticed." (83-84)

-How can we best uncover these ways? And how can we honestly and humbly bring any observations to each other or to our elders in a constructive, non-gossipy, and edifying way?

- In the story of Paul and Peter from Galatians 2, explain in your own words how Peter's gospel culture subverted gospel doctrine.

- Is the fear of human disapproval unique to Peter? In what ways do you see the same problem lead you to living out of step with the truth of the gospel?

- Discuss the importance of this thought from Ortlund: "It is possible for us to unsee by our practical church culture what we say in our official church doctrine." (88)

-Include the equation from page 88 in your discussion.

Right gospel doctrine + anti-gospel culture = a denial of the gospel

- The ultimate application question for us to search out is, "Where have we contradicted or subverted gospel doctrine with the culture in our church?" And not just in our church at large, but specifically, where have you contradicted or subverted gospel doctrine in your individual relationships or in our Growth Groups?

- Ortlund writes, "People passionately committed to gospel doctrine can create a tough church culture, as Peter did." (90)

-Is this a sobering thought? Is it a frightening thought? Why?

- Ortlund describes the way of the world, saying, "All week long we swim in an ocean of judgment and negative scrutiny. We constantly have to comply with the demands of a touchy world, and we never measure up." Then, he quotes psychiatrist Paul Tournier, who says, "In everyday life we are continually soaked in this unhealthy atmosphere of mutual criticism, so much so that we are not always aware of it and we find ourselves drawn unwittingly into an implacable vicious circle: every reproach evokes a feeling of guilt in the critic as much as in the one criticized, and each one gains relief from his guilt in any way he can, by criticizing people and in self-justification." (90)

-Does this describe your work environment? Or your school environment? Your family? Your roommate?

-And so, does this not make you ache for something different? A different kind of community?

-And don't you think your neighbors, caught in the same toxic world, want something different as well?

- Challenge: Here's an immediate point of application for everyone. Memorize and mediate on Galatians 2:20 this week.

- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

### **Prayer Time**

- Spend time praying through some of the key ideas that were discussed in the session.
- You may also find it helpful to distill the key Scripture passage (Galatians 2:11-14) from the chapter down into a few points and pray for a greater understanding or a deeper application of those truths in our lives.
- Finally, pray toward the ultimate goal of Christ Fellowship Church being a place that holds fast to gospel doctrine and holds out the beauty of a gospel culture to all who come in contact with us.

## Session 5 - Chapter 6

**Important Idea:** "The clearer our churches are about Christ, the more polarizing we will be." (95)

**Important Idea:** "The one thing the gospel never does is nothing." (96)

**Important Idea:** "The ministry of the gospel in our churches involves more than doctrinal argumentation. The work of the gospel is subtle, like the work of a fragrance. It is not just brute facts landing hard on someone's mind, but an aroma wafting into a heart. And this light contact proves to be life or death. Such is the astonishing power of the gospel." (99)

### Questions for Discussion

- The main discussion of this chapter revolves around 2 Corinthians 2:15-16. Ortlund summarizes the teaching of those verses saying that as gospel doctrine and gospel culture thrive in our churches, then we can "expect two opposite reactions simultaneously. Some people will experience our churches as 'a fragrance from life to life.' Others will experience them as 'a fragrance from death to death.' The more compelling our churches become through the gospel, the more intense these two reactions will be." (93)

-Initially, does that sound counterintuitive to you? Particularly, does the negative reaction seem counterintuitive?

-But the more you think about it, why does that make perfect sense? What Biblical doctrines would lead you to concur with this understanding?

- Ortlund says, "The clearer our churches are about Christ, the more polarizing we will be." (95)

-Would you describe Christ Fellowship Church as 'polarizing'? Why or why not?

- In your own words, explain what is meant by this Ortlund statement: *The one thing the gospel never does is nothing.*" (96)

- On page 97, Ortlund suggests, "Every time we hear the gospel preached, it hardens us a little more, or it softens us a little more, depending on our heart's condition before God. We cannot safely stay the same, as if we were in control."

-Have you ever noticed this reality in your life?

-Give attention to the Martyn Lloyd-Jones quote on page 97. Have you ever experienced this in your own life?

-If this is how the gospel affects those of us who are already believers, should we not expect the same opposing responses from those who are not Christians?

- From here, we'll switch gears just a bit. And we'd like you to discuss a very brief article, which is also written by Ray Ortlund. There is no need to have your group members read it prior to this discussion, but instead, simply read it aloud together and discuss it as you go along. You can find the content of the article on the next page of this document (if you want to print copies for your group), as well as the link (if you simply want to have folks pull the article up on their phone).

-The article is entitled "Seven Ways We Can Guard and Repair Relationships"

-As we think about how to implement gospel culture in our relationships in the church, these seven ways can give us much to think about. When you walk through them, read each one and then pause to discuss it. Below are a few questions to help you promote discussion on these points.

- How does this concept strike you?
  - How can you apply this?
  - Why have you not applied this better in the past?
  - Why is this important for establishing a gospel culture?
- 
- How does a church that is marked by relationships formed around these principles then serve to waft around the aroma of Christ?
- 
- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

### **Prayer Time**

- Take the seven points from the Ray Ortlund article and pray for those things to mark all of the relationships across CFC and across your Growth Group in particular.

## "Seven Ways We Can Guard and Repair Relationships" <sup>2</sup>

by Ray Ortlund

1. *Let's rejoice in one another, because the Lord rejoices in us.*

Psalm 16:3 sets the overall tone: "As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight." There is excellence to admire in every Christian. And it's easy to discern. Two questions into a conversation and the excellence starts appearing.

2. *Let's create an environment of trust rather than negative scrutiny.*

1 Corinthians 4:5 says, "Do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart." Human eyes are not competent to judge human hearts.

3. *Let's judge ourselves, even as we give each other the benefit of the doubt.*

Matthew 7:5 says, "First take the log out of your own eye." And 1 Corinthians 13:7 says, "Love believes all things." In other words, love fills in the blanks with positive assumptions.

4. *If a problem must be addressed, let's talk to, not about. Gossip destroys.*

Matthew 18:15 says, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone." The Lord didn't say, "Go ask your brother his fault." Let's man up and tell him his sin. But let's tell him to his face, rather than spread accusations around.

5. *If a problem must be addressed, let's avoid blanket statements but identify factual specifics, offer a positive path forward and preserve everyone's dignity.*

"You are \_\_\_\_\_" is too sweeping to be fair. It leaves a person no freedom to change. Better to say, "In this situation, when you \_\_\_\_\_, that was wrong. It would be helpful if, in the future, you would \_\_\_\_\_. What do you think? And is there anything I can do that might help?"

6. *Let's extend kindness.*

Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind to one another." That word "kind" is used in Matthew 11:30 when Jesus says, "My yoke is easy." So kindness asks, "How can I make this situation as easy for the other person as possible? How can I make a positive response as easy as it can be?"

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<sup>2</sup> <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/rayortlund/2015/03/05/seven-ways-we-can-guard-and-repair-relationships/>

*7. When we wrong another, let's admit it: "What I did to you was wrong. I am sorry. By God's grace, I won't do that again. Is there anything I can do now, to make up for it?"*

Where a wrong has been done, as the Bible defines wrong, an apology will help. Reparations are also biblical and may be necessary in the case of a significant injury. But evading the wrongs of our past only builds hypocrisy into our future. And God cannot bless that. But God will surely bless serious repentance. When Zacchaeus vowed to repay the people he had defrauded, the Lord didn't reply, "You don't have to. That's water under the bridge!" No, the Lord said, "Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:8-9).

One of the most beautiful scenes in the Bible is between brothers who had been long alienated: "Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept" (Genesis 33:4). God wants that beauty to reappear in every generation, as needed.

## Session 6 - Chapter 7

**Important Idea:** "In all the world, there is: no trust so solid as gospel doctrine, no community so humane as a gospel culture, nothing so resisted and yet so redemptive as both together, and nothing so worthy of our utmost devotion." (103)

**Important Idea:** "Gospel doctrine creates a gospel culture." (117)

### Questions for Discussion

- Ortlund summarizes the whole book up to this point in the opening words of this chapter. "In all the world, there is: no trust so solid as gospel doctrine, no community so humane as a gospel culture, nothing so resisted and yet so redemptive as both together, and nothing so worthy of our utmost devotion." (103)

-Why do you think that there is "nothing so resisted" as gospel doctrine and gospel culture wedded together?

- Ortlund talks much about the importance of prayer if we are to find any success in this pursuit.

-Do we think that we can achieve any of this (as resisted as it is) apart from diligent prayer?

-When you pray for Christ Fellowship Church, what do you pray? And in light of this study, what are some things that you feel led to pray?

-How did you feel challenged to pray for your pastors/elders? ("Whatever the leaders are, their entire church will eventually become." (109))

-In regards to praying for our unity, Ortlund says that Jesus thought it was so important that he prayed for it for us. Then he asks, "Do we?" Do you pray for unity in our church?

- In the section on Power, as we seek power from God, we must own, and even champion our weakness and neediness. What passages of Scripture ought we to cling to and pray for ourselves as we seek this?

-To suggest some:      -Psalm 40:17                      -2 Corinthians 12:10                      -Matthew 5:3

- What else struck you in the section on Power?

- In the section on Courage, Ortlund writes, "The gospel never advances without someone paying a price. It takes courage to live in the reality of that cost, but it is also freeing. We are no longer encumbered with self-interest, no longer imprisoned within past accomplishments, no longer intimidated by past failures. Instead, we are free to run the race set before us, looking to Jesus alone." (107)

- When was the last time you thought about the cost to you personally of the advance of the gospel?

- If you are honest, do you more frequently think only in terms of how the gospel benefits you, rather than exacts something of you?

- What else struck you in the section on Courage?

- In the section on Love, Ortlund writes, "The command of Christ is that we love one another. The example of Christ is that we die for one another. The promise of Christ is that our love will show a skeptical world the difference he really makes. Love is Christ's authorized way for us to be convincing." (112)

- No doubt, we probably agree with all of this. Even so, why is it so hard to love like we are called to?

- What else struck you in the section of Love?

- Ortlund talks about the importance of 1 John 1:7 as a verse that has the ability to continually renew the love of Christians. The verse is quoted on page 116.

- What would it look like if our Growth Group more faithfully applied 1 John 1:7?

- And what would it look like if we totally disregarded that verse altogether in our faith and practice? (Ortlund's answer: "A heart aloof from God grows aloof from others. It engages in merciless comparisons and endless faultfinding." (117))

- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

## Prayer Time

- Spend time praying through some of the key ideas that were discussed in the session.
- Pray for God to do in our church as a whole and in each of us individually whatever is necessary to create a thriving gospel culture.