



Shaped by the Gospel: Theological Vision Part 1

Introduction: What are we doing here?

Answer:

What does it mean for the gospel to shape a church or ministry?

How has the gospel (as opposed to your family, culture, or other influences) shaped you?

Watch: 3:55 minute Video on Theological Vision

Discuss:

What is theological vision?

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How is Theological Vision different from doctrine or from ministry programs, expressions, or methods? What is the value of developing a theological vision?

How is it possible for two ministers who hold the same theology to have different ministry methods, expressions, or practices? What role does theological vision play in influencing methodology?

Read Together:

It is tempting to assume that if we believe the gospel, our ministry will automatically be shaped by the gospel. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Many churches claim to be gospel-centered, while their ministry practice is more shaped by their culture, traditions, habits, assumptions, history, temperament and other subjective factors than by the dynamics of the gospel.

None of those things—culture, tradition, history, and temperament—are bad. They all should play a part in shaping our ministry practices. But these factors usually go unexamined. When they do, we unintentionally create churches in our own image—churches that look more like us than like the people we want to reach. Worse yet, our ministry practices may obscure the very gospel they are designed to promote.

An important first step toward ensuring our ministries are gospel-centered is examining and coming to terms with how our cultural, historical, and personal contexts affect how we understand and apply the gospel. Put another way, we have to examine our "theological vision."

Differences in theological vision explain why two churches in the same denomination with the same doctrine can look completely different to an outsider, may vehemently disagree with each other's choice of music, liturgy, and programs. It can explain why some churches are fruitful and others aren't.

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Looking at the chart to the right, which of these three levels have you given the most time and attention?

Why do you think this level has been your focus?

Which of these three levels have you given the least time and attention?

Why hasn't this level been more prominent in your ministry planning?

Homework:

Read: **The Gospel Is Not Everything** (pages 27-46) in *Shaped by the Gospel*

Pray: Spend time each day asking the Lord to show you where he might be working the world around you. Sit silently for 2 minutes and focus on his presence in your life and this community.

