

SOME THOUGHTS ON GOSPEL-CENTERED TRANSFORMATION

As you work your way through our website and interact with our personnel, you will hear a lot about Gospel-centered transformation. That phrase is not an advertising slogan that is here today and gone tomorrow, or that has very little (if any) impact upon daily operations. It instead represents a core conviction of Western that lies at the heart of our efforts to be used by God to produce spiritual renewal through reformation and revival. As British preacher and historian Iain Murray has affirmed, "Every awakening begins with the renewed discovery of Christ's teaching on the new birth."

Why is this important?

Because only the gospel, being "the power of God for salvation" (Rom. 1:16), has the ability to deal with both the root and fruit of human fallenness. It brings not just forgiveness for sins, but also the ability and motivation to live the kind of lives God originally intended for humanity. For we need not just a fresh start, but also a new heart; and that is precisely what God gives to those who embrace the good news of justification by faith in Christ alone. Grace and gratitude provide both the dynamic and atmosphere of this new life. The transformation that results is clearly supernatural in breadth and depth, surpassing all merely human efforts (from secular self-help to religious moralism) to produce substantial life change.

A key priority in our curricular objectives, therefore, is to enhance both our students' *confidence* in the gospel's unique transforming power and their *competence* in unpacking its ramifications for the various issues of life. An important element in this process is helping them personally experience in-depth change through the Spirit's application of truth and love to their innermost being, setting them free from patterns of stubborn sin and enabling them to manifest more faithfully the beauty of Christ-likeness in both attitude and action. That experience of personal transformation naturally (or, more accurately, *supernaturally*) empowers their ministry with heightened credibility and compellingness.

None of this happens if we don't take theology seriously, because it is the truth that sets us free (cf., Jn. 8:32). If, however, that truth is studied merely as an end in itself (rather than as the means to the end of character transformation and fellowship with the Triune God), heart change is similarly truncated.

Restoring the biblical gospel to its rightful place of centrality in evangelical faith and practice, and nurturing holistic transformation through the passionate proclamation and faithful application of that gospel, is what we mean by Gospel-

centered transformation. We believe this stance is the essential for producing fruit that lasts, whether the setting is a pulpit, counseling center, remote village, classroom, or any other venue in which redemptive influence can be exerted. If you agree, we would love to have you join us in this quest.

Randal Roberts
President