

# 04 Questions

## with D.A. Carson

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interview by Justin Buzzard



**01 Q. In a paragraph, what does it mean to be gospel-centered in one's Christian life?**  
Some think of the gospel as so slender it does nothing more than get us into the kingdom. After that the real work of transformation begins. But a biblically-faithful understanding of the gospel shows that gospel to be rich, powerful, the wisdom of God and the power of God, all we need in Christ. It is the gospel that saves us, transforms us, conforms us to Christ, prepares us for the new heaven and the new earth, establishes our relations with fellow-believers, teaches us how to work and serve so as to bring glory to God, calls forth and edifies the church, and so forth. This gospel saves -- and "salvation" means more than just "getting in," but transformed wholeness. It would be easy to write many pages on how a gospel-centeredness affects all of life, but one must begin with a full-orbed understanding of what the gospel is and does.

**02 Q. What do you see happening with the gospel and my generation, the twentysomethings of the American church? Are you encouraged?**  
Cautiously, yes. It is still a day of relatively small things. But it is always encouraging to observe the substantial number of twentysomethings who want to learn what the Bible says, who are looking for faithful mentors, who are tired of the endless openness of some strands of postmodernism but who do not want to drift back into isolationism or privatized religion. Some from very culturally conservative Christian backgrounds are engaging in a pendulum swing toward "hip" stances that are barely orthodox, but they are winning almost no one except other people like themselves. In God's grace, the future lies with that part of the younger generation that is passionate to understand, believe, and obey the truth, and who to that end are diligently studying the Word of God for themselves and learning lessons in contrition and joy, in humility and courage, in faith and obedience, that every generation of believers must learn.

**03 Q. Here in the San Francisco Bay Area we have a lot of work to do. This is a highly unchurched metropolitan area with great hostility to the gospel. What are a couple brief points of counsel you'd give to church leaders wanting to build (or re-build) a gospel ministry in a region like this?**  
Trust Christ; believe the power of the gospel; abandon short-term gimmicks; think big but start small and be faithful; meet with, work with, pray with, learn from, those who have a common set of commitments and vision.

**04 Q. What are a few key resources you recommend to your average church member who wants to better understand how the gospel is meant to drive the entirety of the Christian life?**  
Once again, the first step is to understand the gospel, for in doing so, its ties to all of life become luminous. Many of the sermons on [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org) treat such matters. At the risk of calling attention to individuals: (1) Not a few of the sermons of Tom Nelson (on the site) talk about how the believer serves God in the normal responsibilities and cycles of work. (2) Many of Tim Keller's sermons do the same, with a greater emphasis on working in the arts, journalism, music, and so forth. (3) For a challenge across the field, read John Piper's *Don't Waste Your Life*. (4) To think through faithfulness in gospel proclamation and doing "deeds of mercy," begin, perhaps, with a ten-page essay by Tim Keller in *Themelios* 34/1 (also on the site). (5) For those especially interested in Christianity and the arts, see the lovely 64-page booklet by Phil Ryken, *Art for God's Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts* (2006). (6) For those interested in more global/political/theological analysis, try my *Christ and Culture Revisited*. (7) Similarly, it is worth reading Andy Crouch's *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*. (8) There are some workshops that were offered at both the 2007 and the 2009 Coalition conference that bear on these matters, and they are available as acoustic downloads. Some of them are quite moving.

This is but the merest introduction. What you must not do, however, is become so interested on questions about how the gospel should drive our entire life and impact every dimension of life, that one begins to neglect the study of the Bible itself, and remove one's focus from Jesus, his cross and resurrection, his gospel.

