

"A remarkably balanced book that can correct,
restore, and help regardless of which way you
lean or land on all things 'missional.'"

MATT CHANDLER

What Is the *Mission* of the Church?

MAKING SENSE *of* SOCIAL JUSTICE, SHALOM, *and the* GREAT COMMISSION

KEVIN DEYOUNG & GREG GILBERT

What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission

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PART 1

Understanding Our Mission

CHAPTER 1



A Common Word in Need of a Careful Definition

If everything is mission, nothing is mission.

—STEPHEN NEILL

IF YOU'RE READING THIS BOOK, you're probably a Christian. And if a Christian, you probably take some kind of interest in the church. And if you've been involved in a church, you've probably wondered from time to time, "What are we trying to accomplish anyway?" Maybe as a pastor you've asked yourself, "With everyone interested in their own program and passionate about their own cause, are we even aiming at the same thing?" Maybe as a Christian businessman or stay-at-home mom you've thought, "I know we are supposed to glorify God. But under that big umbrella, what does God want our church to be doing?"

At their root, these questions all ask the same thing: *What is the mission of the church?*

The question is deceptively complex and potentially divisive. For starters, what do we even mean by *mission*? And if that can be settled, we then face more difficult questions. Is the mission of the church *discipleship* or *good deeds* or both? Is the mission of the church the same as the mission of God? Is the mission of the church distinct from the responsibilities of individual Christians? Is the mission of the church a continuation of the mission of Jesus? If so, what was his mission anyway?

Related to these questions are others: What should be the church's role in pursuing *social justice*? Are we right to even use that phrase, and what do we mean by it? Does God expect the church to change the world, to be about the work of transforming its social structures? What about the *kingdom*? How do we build the kingdom of God? Or are we even capable of building the kingdom? How does the kingdom relate to the *gospel*? How does the gospel relate to *the whole story line of the Bible*? And how does all of this relate to *mission*?

Despite all these questions, there is a lot that evangelicals can agree on when it comes to mission: the gospel is, at the very least, the good news of Jesus's death and resurrection; proclamation is essential to the church's witness; heaven and hell are real; people are lost without Jesus; bodies matter as well as souls; and good deeds as the fruit of transformed lives are not optional. But if we are to find a lasting and robust agreement on mission praxis and mission priorities, we must move past generalities and build our theology of mission using the right categories and the right building blocks. In other words, as we grasp key concepts like kingdom, gospel, and social justice, we will be better able to articulate a careful, biblically faithful understanding of the mission of the church. And just as important, we'll be able to pursue obedience to Christ in a way that is more realistic, freeing, and, in the long run, fruitful.

What Is Mission?

Before going any further in answering the question posed in this book's title, we should acknowledge the difficulty in the question itself. A big part of the problem in defining the mission of the church is defining the word *mission*. Because *mission* is not a biblical word like *covenant* or *justification* or *gospel*, determining its meaning for believers is particularly difficult. We could do a study of the word *gospel* and come to some pretty firm biblical conclusions about "What is the Gospel?"—and we will, later in this book!¹ But *mission* is a bit trickier. On the one hand the Latin verb *mittere* corresponds to the Greek verb *apostellein*, which occurs 137 times in the New Testament. So mission is not exactly extrabiblical. But as a noun, *mission* does not occur in the Bible, which makes the question of this book more difficult.

The answer to the question, "What is the mission of the church?" depends, to a large degree, on what is meant by "mission." One could make a case that *glorifying God and enjoying him forever* is the mission of the church, because that is our chief end as redeemed believers. Someone else might argue that *loving God and loving neighbor* is the best description of our mission, because those are the greatest commandments. And someone else might borrow from the nineteenth-century hymn and argue that *trust and obey* is the essence of our mission, because that is the great call of the gospel message. In one sense we would be foolish to argue with any of these answers. If mission is simply a synonym for living a faithful Christian life, then there are dozens of ways to answer the question, "What is the mission of the church?"

But isn't it wise to aim for a more precise definition of such a common word? We've never met a Christian who was against mission. In fact, every church we've ever known would say they are passionate about mission. So shouldn't we try to be clear

¹See also Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), and D. A. Carson, "What Is the Gospel?—Revisited," in *For the Fame of God's Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*, ed. Sam Storms and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 147–70.

what we are all for? Christians have long seen the importance of carefully defining other theological words like *Trinity*, *essence*, and *inerrancy*.² Theology will not go far without careful attention to distinctions and definitions. So why not work toward a definition of *mission*? Christians often talk about mission trips, mission fields, and mission work, so it would seem to be a good idea at least to attempt to define what we are talking about. Granted, word meanings can change, and it may not be possible to rein in the definition of *mission* after fifty years of expansion. But it seems to us that a more precise definition is necessary, if for no other reason than the conviction that Stephen Neill's quip is spot-on: "If everything is mission, nothing is mission."³

But where to start with a definition? In his influential book *Transforming Mission*, David Bosch rightly argues, "Since the 1950s there has been a remarkable escalation in the use of the word 'mission' among Christians. This went hand in hand with a significant broadening of the concept, at least in certain circles."⁴ It used to be that *mission* referred pretty narrowly to Christians sent out cross-culturally to convert non-Christians and plant churches. But now *mission* is understood much more broadly. Environmental stewardship is mission. Community renewal is mission. Blessing our neighbors is mission. Mission is here. Mission is there. Mission is everywhere. We are all missionaries. As Christopher Wright puts it, disagreeing with Stephen Neill's quote, "If everything is mission . . . *everything is mission*."⁵ The ambiguity of the term *mission* is only augmented

²Jonathan Edwards, in his famous treatise *The End for Which God Created the World*, went so far as to distinguish between a *chief* end, an *ultimate* end, an *inferior* end, and a *subordinate* end. See John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).

³Quoted in Keith Ferdinando, "Mission: A Problem of Definition," *Themelios* 33, no. 1; <http://thegospelcoalition.org/publications/33-1/mission-a-problem-of-definition>.

⁴David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 1.

⁵Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 26; emphasis added. The disagreement, however, should not be exaggerated. Neill allows for a broad scope of Christian activities, but would place these within a correct theology of the *church* and a correct theology of

by the recent proliferation of terms like *missional* and *missio Dei*. It's no wonder Bosch concludes a few pages later, "Ultimately, mission remains undefinable."⁶

But perhaps a common definition is not yet a lost cause. Before giving up on a definition, Bosch acknowledges that *mission*, at least in traditional usage, "presupposes a sender, a person or persons sent by the sender, those to whom one is sent, and an assignment."⁷ Though his broader theology of mission is quite different from what we will propose in this book, and though he doesn't like many of the ways this traditional understanding was employed, Bosch is on to something here. At its most basic, the term *mission* implies two things to most people: (1) being sent and (2) being given a task. The first point makes sense because *mission* comes from a Latin word (*mittere*) meaning "to send." The second point is implied in the first. When sent on a mission, we are sent to *do something*—and not *everything*, either, but rather we are given a particular assignment. On a street level, people basically know what mission means. For example, the old TV show *Mission: Impossible* always involved a specific goal that Peter Graves was supposed to accomplish. Companies spend millions every year honing their "mission statements," and fast-food restaurants even post "Our Mission" on the wall to assure us they're fanatically focused on serving us the best burgers in town. Even in the world around us, everyone understands that a mission is that primary thing you set out to accomplish. Most every organization has *something*, as opposed to other things, that it does and must do, and it understands that thing to be its mission. We think the same is true of the church.

In his study of mission in John's Gospel, Andreas Köstenberger proposes a working definition along the same lines: "Mission is the specific task or purpose which a person or group seeks

ministry. In other words, mission is not everything, but that doesn't mean the church does only one thing. Thanks to David Reimer for drawing our attention to this point.

⁶Ibid., 9.

⁷Ibid., 1.

to accomplish.”⁸ Notice again the key concepts of being sent and being given a task. Likewise, John Stott has argued that mission is not everything the church does, but rather describes “everything the church is sent into the world to do.”⁹ We are convinced that if you ask most Christians, “What is the mission of the church?” they will hear you asking, “What is the specific task or purpose that the church is *sent into the world to accomplish?*” This is our working definition of *mission* and what we mean to ask with the title of this book.

A Correction to the Correction

Our sincere hope is that this book can be a positive contribution to the mission discussion so prevalent and so needed in the evangelical world. We want to be positive in tone. We want to build up rather than tear down. But inevitably, a fair amount of our work in these chapters will be corrective as well.

Some of what we want to correct is an overexpansive definition that understands mission to be just about every good thing a Christian could do as a partner with God in his mission to redeem the whole world.¹⁰ But we are *not* antimissional.¹¹ More and more, *missional* simply means being “on mission”—conscious of how everything we do should serve the mission of the church, being winsome and other-centered and Good Samaritan-like with those outside the community of faith, and having a sanctified strategy

⁸Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 199. The full quotation reads, “Mission is the specific task or purpose which a person or group seeks to accomplish, involving various modes of movement, be it sending or being sent, coming and going, descending and ascending, gathering by calling others to follow, or following.”

⁹John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should Be Doing Now!* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 30.

¹⁰For example, Reggie McNeal says “the missional church is *the people of God partnering with God in his redemptive mission in the world.*” *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 24.

¹¹We hope it goes without saying that we are not anti-our brothers in the Acts 29 and Redeemer networks. This book is not written to critique them, and we are confident they share our desire to make gospel proclamation and discipleship central in the mission of the church.

of being intentional and “attractional” for those who don’t know Christ. It is often shorthand for “get out of your holy huddle and go engage your community with the gospel.” We are all for that. Every Christian should be. We are not out to tar and feather any Christian who dares put *-al* on the end of *mission*. Even less do we want to cast aspersions on many of our friends who happily use the word and usually mean very good things by it.

Nevertheless, it is not wrong to probe the word *missional*. It’s a big trunk that can smuggle a great deal of unwanted baggage. Being suspicious of every mention of the word is bad, but raising concerns about how the word is sometimes used is simply wise.

With that in mind, we register a few concerns about how missional thinking has sometimes played out in the conversation about the church’s mission:

1. We are concerned that good behaviors are sometimes commended but in the wrong categories. For example, many good deeds are promoted under the term *social justice*, when we think “loving your neighbor” is often a better category. Or, folks will talk about transforming the world, when we think “faithful presence” is a better way to describe what we are trying to do and actually can do in the world. Or, sometimes well-meaning Christians talk about “building the kingdom” or “building *for* the kingdom,” when actually the verbs associated with the kingdom are almost always passive (*enter, receive, inherit*). We’d do better to speak of living as citizens of the kingdom, rather than telling our people that they build the kingdom.

2. We are concerned that in our newfound missional zeal we sometimes put hard “oughts” on Christians where there should be inviting “cans.” You *ought* to do something about human trafficking. You *ought* to do something about AIDS. You *ought* to do something about lack of good public education. When you say “ought,” you imply that if the church does not tackle these problems, we are being disobedient. We think it would be better to invite individual Christians, in keeping with their gifts and

calling, to try to solve these problems rather than indicting the church for “not caring.”

3. We are concerned that in all our passion for renewing the city or tackling social problems, we run the risk of marginalizing the one thing that makes Christian mission Christian: namely, making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Before we go any farther down the missional-corrective road, though, perhaps it would be helpful to make clear at the outset what we do and do not want to accomplish with this book.

We do *not* want:

- Christians to be indifferent toward the suffering around them and around the world
- Christians to think evangelism is the only thing in life that really counts
- Christians who risk their lives and sacrifice for the poor and disadvantaged to think their work is in any way suspect or is praiseworthy only if it results in conversions
- Christians to retreat into holy huddles or be blissfully unconcerned to work hard and make an impact in whatever field or career to which the Lord calls them
- Christians to stop dreaming of creative, courageous ways to love their neighbors and impact their cities

We want to underline all those bullet points, star them, mark them with highlighter, and write them on our hearts. It’s far too easy to get our heads right, but our hearts and hands wrong.

Having said all that, however, here’s some of what we *do* want:

- We want to make sure the gospel—the good news of Christ’s death for sin and subsequent resurrection—is of first importance in our churches.

- We want Christians freed from false guilt—from thinking the church is either responsible for most problems in the world or responsible to fix these problems.
- We want the crystal-clear and utterly unique task of the church—making disciples of Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father—put front and center, not lost in a flurry of commendable concerns.
- We want Christians to understand the story line of the Bible and think more critically about specific texts within this story.
- We want the church to remember that there is something worse than death and something better than human flourishing. If we hope only for renewed cities and restored bodies in this life, we are of all people most to be pitied.

In correcting certain aspects of some missional thinking, we realize that missional thinking itself is striving to correct abuses of traditional missiology. Both corrections may be necessary at times. Hopefully no evangelical would say (or think), “Ah, let it all burn up. Who cares about food and water for the poor? Who gives a rip about HIV? Give ’em the gospel for the soul and ignore the needs of the body.” This is what missional thinking is *against*. And similarly, we hope no evangelical would say (or think) the opposite: “Sharing the gospel is offensive and to be avoided. As long as the poor have job training, health care, and education—that’s enough. The world needs more food, not more sermons.” This is what we trust missional thinking is *not for*.

A Prayer for Humility and Understanding

The truth is that both sides have some important things to say to one another, and we should be careful in our mutual correction not to overcompensate. At their best, missional thinkers

are warning the church against a careless, loveless indifference to the problems and potential opportunities all around us, a dualistic disregard for the whole person. On the other hand, a (usually) different group of Christians fears overly optimistic (and exhausting) utopian dreams, a loss of God-centeredness, and a diminishment of the church's urgent message of Christ crucified for hell-bound sinners.

Both are real dangers. We admit we are probably more sensitive to the second danger. And indeed one of the aims of this book is to guard the church from these errors. But we fully understand that many Christians, perhaps even the two of us, are often in danger of passing by the wounded man on the Jericho road. One of the challenges of this book—probably the biggest challenge—is that we may be seen as (or actually be!) two guys only paying lip service to good deeds. While we hope this book gives Christians a better handle on disputed texts and better categories for thinking of their service in the world, we would be disappointed to discover a year from now that our work did anything to discourage radical love and generosity for hurting people. Both of us, although far from perfect examples, have often given to hurting people and have supported organizations and individuals who work to alleviate suffering. Both our churches are involved in mercy ministry at home and abroad. All that to say, we want to be—and we want our congregants and all our readers to be—the sort of “just person” Tim Keller describes as living “a life of honesty, equity, and generosity in every aspect of his or her life.”¹²

And yet this book is not about “generous justice.” It is about the mission of the church. We want to help Christians articulate and live out their views on the mission of the church in ways that are more theologically faithful, exegetically careful, and personally sustainable.

¹²Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Dutton, 2010), 17.

A Pastoral Approach

At the beginning of a book it is often helpful to understand what kind of work you are reading. This is not a book by and for biblical or theological scholars. We will deal with a lot of texts and interact with a lot of theology (and hopefully will do so responsibly), but we are not attempting a scholarly monograph on a biblical theology of mission. We are not trying to tell mission boards what to do or to instruct missionaries on how to do their work, though we would like to think this book might be helpful to both groups. We are pastors, writing for the “average” Christian and the “ordinary” pastor trying to make sense of a whole host of missiological questions. From many conversations in print, online, and in person our sense is that this whole issue of mission (along with related issues like kingdom, social justice, shalom, cultural mandate, and caring for the poor) is the most confusing, most discussed, most energizing, and most potentially divisive issue in the evangelical church today. It is certainly a likely fault line in the so-called young, restless, and Reformed movement.

In doing research for this book we read a number of blogs and articles and a big stack of books. From time to time we’ll cite these explicitly in order to interact with real people and their ideas. But we will leave a lot of our research in the background. We do this for two reasons: (1) so as not to distract the reader with gobs of footnotes, and (2) so as not to give any impression that we are trying to size up the missional church. We don’t attempt to define *missional*, and we aren’t trying to divide the missiological landscape into good guys and bad guys. We really don’t want this to be an us-against-them kind of book. But we do want to respond to potential objections and interact with different missiological approaches. Hence, we tried to make our missions-related reading deep and wide.¹³

¹³Among the books we read in part or (more often) in whole are: Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*; Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids:

Back to the Question at Hand

So what is the mission of the church? We've kept you in suspense long enough. In short, we will argue that the mission of the church is summarized in the Great Commission passages¹⁴—the climactic marching orders Jesus issues at the ends of the Gospels and at the beginning of Acts. We believe the church is sent into the world to witness to Jesus by proclaiming the gospel and making disciples of all nations. This is our task. This is our unique and central calling.

That's the case we will seek to make in the next chapter, looking both at the Great Commission passages themselves and at several other texts that are often suggested as alternative or additional commissions for the church. The next six chapters (part 2) explore a number of larger theological concepts that are always at issue in these discussions of mission. Chapter 3 asks what the main thrust of the

Eerdmans, 1994); Bosch, *Transforming Mission*; P. T. O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); Darrell Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel*; James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000); Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001); Mark R. Gornik, *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006); Ed Stetzer and David Putnam, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville: B&H, 2006); Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006); Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2007); McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*; James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Keller, *Generous Justice*, John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010); David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2010); M. David Sills, *Reaching and Teaching: A Call to Great Commission Obedience* (Chicago: Moody, 2010); Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010); David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); Wright, *The Mission of God's People*; Michael Horton, *The Gospel Commission: Recovering God's Strategy for Making Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

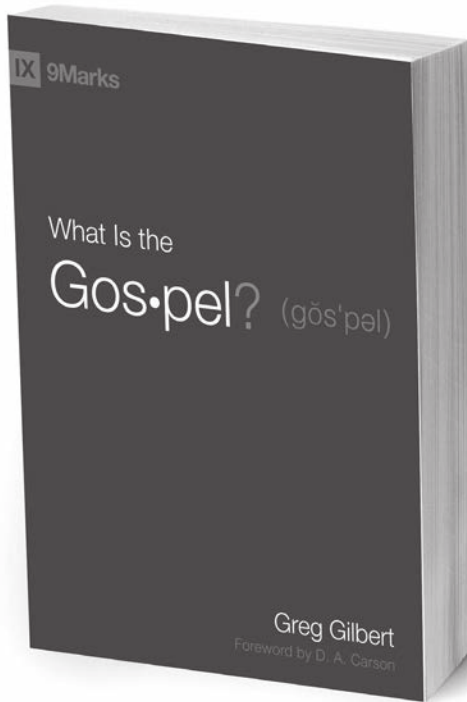
¹⁴Matt. 28:16–20; Mark 13:10; 14:9; Luke 24:44–49; Acts 1:8. See chapter 2 for discussion.

Bible's story line is and how that affects our understanding of the church's mission. Chapter 4 seeks to understand the structure and content of the gospel message itself and asks whether the gospel of forgiveness of sins through Jesus is "too small." Chapter 5 considers the Bible's teaching on the kingdom of God and how we relate to it. Chapters 6 and 7 form a pair, exploring the idea of "social justice" and looking carefully at several biblical texts relating to justice. In chapter 8 we think about God's intention to remake the world, and consider what that means for the church's activity in the world. Chapter 9 is our attempt to think practically about what all this means. If the mission of the church is proclamation and disciple making, then what is the theological motivation for good deeds? And how might a local church think about what it ought to be doing? Finally, chapter 10 offers a concluding perspective and an encouragement to all of us to recommit ourselves to the great work our Lord has given us.

One last word before we launch into things: We want to say again that we strongly support churches undertaking mercy ministries in their communities. Both of our churches have programs and support missionaries that aim to meet physical needs while also hoping to share the gospel whenever possible. Though we do not believe that the mission of the church is to build the kingdom or to partner with God in remaking the world, this does not mean we are against cultural engagement. Our point is simply that we must understand these endeavors in the right theological categories and embrace them without sacrificing more explicit priorities. We should not cheapen good deeds by making them only a means to some other end (evangelism), but neither do we want to exaggerate our responsibility by thinking it is our duty to build the kingdom through our good deeds. Similarly, we should not overspiritualize social action by making it equivalent to God's shalom. As the church loves the world so loved by God, we will work to relieve suffering wherever we can, but especially eternal suffering.¹⁵

¹⁵See D. A. Carson's editorial in *Themelios* 33, no. 2; <http://thegospelcoalition.org/publications/33-2/editorial>.

Also Available from **Greg Gilbert**



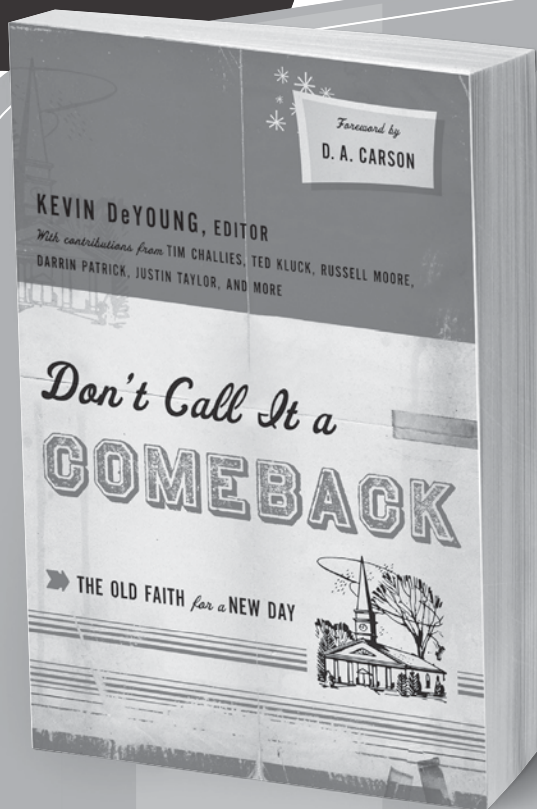
"What Is the Gospel?" provides a biblically faithful explanation of the gospel and equips Christians to discern deviations from that glorious message. How I wish I could place this book in the hands of every pastor and church member."

C. J. Mahaney, Sovereign Grace Ministries

"What Is the Gospel?" will sharpen your thinking about the gospel, etching it more deeply on your heart so you can share the good news of Jesus Christ with boldness. It will leave you pondering the extent to which the gospel has impacted your own life. It will cause you to cry out with thankfulness to God for what Christ has accomplished."

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Evangelical Faith and Practice for a New Day

Don't Call It a Comeback unites some of today's young evangelical leaders in a bold assertion of the stability, relevance, and necessity of Christian orthodoxy, and reasserts the theological nature of evangelicalism.

Kevin DeYoung and contributors like Russell Moore, Tullian Tchividjian, Darrin Patrick, Justin Taylor, Thabiti Anyabwile, Greg Gilbert, and Tim Challies examine what evangelical Christianity is and does within the broad categories of history, theology, and practice. They demonstrate that evangelicalism is still biblically and historically rooted and remains the same framework for faith that we need today.

“IF EVERYTHING IS MISSION, NOTHING IS MISSION.”

STEPHEN NEILL

Christians today define *mission* more broadly and variably than ever before. Are we, as the body of Christ, headed in the same direction or are we on divergent missions?

Some argue that the mission of the church is to confront injustice and alleviate suffering, doing more to express God’s love for the world. Others are concerned that the church is in danger of losing its God-centeredness and thereby emphasize the proclamation of the gospel. It appears as though misunderstanding of mission persists.

Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert believe there is a lot that evangelicals can agree on if only we employ the right categories and build our theology of mission from the same biblical building blocks. Explaining key concepts like kingdom, gospel, and social justice, DeYoung and Gilbert help us to get on the same page—united by a common cause—and launch us forward into the true mission of the church.

“Among the many books that have recently appeared on mission, this is the best one if you are looking for sensible definitions, clear thinking, readable writing, and the ability to handle the Bible in more than proof-texting ways. I pray that God will use it to bring many to a renewed grasp of what the gospel is and how that gospel relates, on the one hand, to biblical theology and, on the other, to what we are called to do.”

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