

GOSPEL CENTERED LIFE



BY IVAN
RASKINO

Reviews

From a professional Marine Engineer and Naval Architect to a vocational Fisher of Persons and Shepherd of People! The Gospel of Jesus Christ has brought about this significant transformation in the life and work of Ivan Raskino. Hence, it is apt that his latest publication is entitled "Gospel-Centered Life."

When I was doing my theological studies, one particular teacher always had one question for every student preacher in the Homiletics Class: What is the gospel in your sermon? That is precisely what Ivan Raskino states in the early part of his book: *We should include the gospel every week because it will touch the hearts of our congregation and motivate them to worship God and progress in their discipleship. He further asserts the gospel is so vital that believers should preach it daily to themselves.*

Therefore, Ivan Raskino's book of sermons is an important contribution to gospel-centered day-to-day living. The book is didactic, as it provides deep biblical insights about the gospel. The book is also exhortatory, encouraging people to respond positively to the gospel. Also, the book is pastoral as it guides persons to practice the gospel every day of their lives. This book will help individuals and groups in their daily walk with Christ.

Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad

Former Principal of Aizawl Theological College, Mizoram, India (2008-2010). Former General Secretary of National Council of Churches India (2010-2018).
Mentor, Dinbandhu Ministries, India

Rev. Ivan Raskino has done an excellent service by putting together sermons that he preached for wider circulation for pastors, preachers, evangelists, and those keen on preaching the Word of God. This 350-page book, *Gospel-Centered Life*, is packed with a comprehensive and systematic treatment of the Gospel that is done cohesively so that others can use or build on these sermons.

The overall treatment of the Gospel is quite thorough and grounded in the scripture with the spread of illustrations that are helpful to apply the message of the Gospel to our situations. Rev. Raskino has demonstrated his keen study of the Scripture and skills of interpreting it well so that the message of the Gospel comes alive to the readers. This book has come from the heart of a man who has lived both in the secular and sacred worlds and made a lasting impact on both. I

warmly commend this book to all interested in understanding, interpreting and presenting the Gospel message in our contemporary world.

Rev. Atul Y. Aghamkar, PhD

Former Pastor of Calvary, Suvrutta and Community Alliance Churches.

Former Head of Department of Missiology at Union Biblical Seminary, Pune and at South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, Bangalore.

Director, National Center for Urban Transformation, India

What a book! *Gospel Centered Life* could be Ivan Raskino's swan song. He's poured the best of all his 81 years into it. It's a compendium of 56 sermon series he delivered online to a set of pastors. It's a labour of love to God and his fellow pastors, whom Ivan has much time for.

As the title implies, *Gospel Centered Life* is about this glorious Gospel that Jesus Christ bequeathed to all mankind. The Gospel is the answer to the fallenness of mankind, which we see all over the place and in our own lives. Ivan's life story of God's redeeming power through the death and resurrection of Jesus

comes through these pages. The book is solidly Bible-based. It bears Ivan's dogged penchant for scholarly research. But being a reflective practitioner, he has tested the power of the gospel in his life and others, starting from the streets of Mumbai, where he started a unique street Church in 1987. No wonder it's rich in biblical content, with warm real-life anecdotes, answers to key questions of life, and the credibility of a tested man of God who has walked the talk and talked the walk.

The net result is loaded topics covering personal identity and the gospel transforming power in individuals and society.

If you're a pastor, this book is a must not only for your own life but also as a resource for you to refer to for your sermons and pastoral ministry.

Rev David Fernandes

Retired Senior Pastor of New Frontiers Commission.

Coordinator of Mumbai Transformation Network

It is rare to find a collection of sermons that is so closely backed up by the life message of the writer. But with Pastor Ivan Raskino's 'The Gospel Centered Life', that is precisely what you will find. This treasure trove of relevant sermons can be used in various settings. They are marked by simplicity yet with theological

depth. Pastor Ivan gave many of them initially in response to the needs of village church planting pastors, and they ring with the actual needs of believers being met with strong Scriptural content.

Perhaps the key statement in introducing this collection is Pastor Ivan's concern that 'the Gospel would be in every sermon'. And as you read through these, whether in apologetic-related material or practical messages on marriage, the Gospel is there. And with the Gospel, I would say hope is there. These sermons

are soaked in hope. This message of the hope of the Gospel is Pastor Ivan's life message. My wife and I have known him and his family for over 35 years and have seen the fruit of his faithful life and ministry.

I highly recommend this collection not only for your growth and edification but to share with others in the grassroots setting of feeding the flock of God, whether urban or rural. As Pastor Ivan writes, reading these sermons will bring a 'holy discontent' and a hunger in your soul for more of God and for more in your own life of obedience in sharing the same Gospel with others that inflames him.

Steve Cochrane PhD
YWAM

Gospel Centered Life

Ivan Raskino, Pastor, author and publisher.

August 2023, Bangalore, 560005, India

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Foreword

Ivan Raskino has preached the Gospel of Christ Jesus and passionately lived the Gospel to bless the nations. I have had the privilege to know him and learn from his dedication to serving the Lord and his people. The title of the book *Gospel Centred Life*, therefore, truly reflects his life journey with the Lord, who called him to witness the transforming resurrection power of the Gospel. The Gospel is the good news that God in Christ forgives our sins as we turn to him in repentance. Therefore, one wonders why one does not believe in the good news. It is because of their unbelief!

The Gospel story indeed centres around "God is love" (1 John 4: 16), which is why God's love is the original source of all love. God's love is not dependent upon any situation, and God's love is unconditional and holy. The scripture reveals God creates out of love and for love. God created the world and gave it to humanity to be faithful stewards of creation. The reality of creation shows God's self-giving love. Creation is a gift and remains good even though it bears marks of "futility" and "sin." God is the source of all goodness.

When humanity chose to disobey and declare their independence from God and separated from the life of God, their mind was darkened, and their heart was hardened due to their ignorance (Ephesians 4:18). Since God is the source of all life, the solution for the problems of the world is to be found in him alone. And this truth is brought clearly by the author in the book's narration.

God, who is love and who creates out of love, also redeems the world by his self-sacrificial love; Jesus became an atoning sacrifice for the sins of humanity to redeem humanity and creation. On the cross, the Son of God dies for God's beloved creatures who became God's enemies; Christ justifies the ungodly by grace alone. God redeems humanity in the face of its denial and enmity to God. Amazing love! The amazing sacrifice that reveals the wisdom of God in action in history when the "Word became flesh" (John 1:14) to transform our lives into the likeness of God; this is indeed the power of the Gospel. God's kind of love, which is situation-independent and unconditional, is the hallmark of the Christian life. So, the love of the enemy, no less than the love of neighbour, is essential to Christian life. We love God and all of God's creation because "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son so that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

The life of Jesus' disciple is oriented towards participating in God's mission to saturate the world with God's love and make it God's and creatures' dwelling place.

God who is love, God creates out of love and for love, God who loves redeems because of love and God who loves will bring the salvation of humanity and creation to consummation when God ushers in the new heaven and new earth.

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God will be with them and their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" He, who was seated on the throne, said, "I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:3-5). The Gospel of the Kingdom of God reveals when enmity and sorrow caused by sin will be replaced by peaceful and joyful communion.

God suffered to redeem us. For a God who cannot suffer cannot love either. It's a call for us to be prepared to suffer for the sake of the Gospel; the goal is a world created by God's love is joyfully fully reconciled with God and one another, and creation itself is delivered from futility.

Read the narration that Ivan Raskino, my friend, has presented as a witness to the transformation of life into the likeness of Christ by the power of the Gospel.

Rev. Dr. Richard Howell

Principal: Caleb Institute. Former General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship

of India and the Asia Evangelical Alliance. And a founding member of the Global Christian Forum.

Author

Ivan Raskino was a professional Marine Engineer and Naval Architect when he first gave his heart to our Lord Jesus at age 40. Five years later, he felt the Lord calling him to start a church among the oppressed of Mumbai. Accordingly, he left his job and began preaching on Mumbai streets for many years.

He and his wife, Melanie, started the Valley of Praise Fellowship in their residence, which later expanded to other churches in different locations in Mumbai. The Lord showed Ivan the keys to ministering to people from hurting

and

challenging backgrounds. Ivan taught in many churches in India, Japan and the UK, finding that strongholds were broken and hundreds of people were powerfully set free and baptised with the Holy Spirit. Ivan also acted as Prayer Coordinator in Mumbai City from 1995-2005 and led in worship with his wife, Melanie, in many inter-church gatherings in Mumbai.

Ivan has now retired as an active pastor and devotes his time to being a friend to rural pastors in India. He also served as a board member on several International and National Boards ³ among them are International Justice Mission (USA and India), Justice and Care (UK and India), and Interserve (India).

Ivan and Melanie have been married since 1970. They have four children and four grandchildren.

Contents

No. Items	Page
Reviews	2
Title Page	5
Foreword	6
Author	8
Contents Page	9
Introduction	11
1. What is the Gospel — Its Apostolic Authority	14
2. What is the Gospel — Its Core	19
3. Gospel, Resurrection and History	24
4. Gospel, Resurrection and Mary Magdalene	28
5. Gospel, Four Gospels, Paul's Gospel and Whole Gospel 6.	31
Gospel, Five Solas and Solid Ground	36
7. Gospel and Human Misery	42
8. Gospel and Born Again	47
9. Gospel and Forgiveness	53
10. Gospel and Glory of God	59
11. Gospel and Identity on Christ — Sonship	66
12. Gospel and Identity in Christ — Bride of Christ	71
13. Gospel and Grasping our New Identity	75
14. Gospel and Fear in Times of Trouble	80
15. Gospel and Spirit of Fear	86
16. Gospel and Persecution	90
17. Gospel and Culture	95
18. Gospel and Dignity of Work	99
19. Gospel at the Cross — Four Responses	104
20. Gospel at the Cross — Two Criminal Responses	109
21. Gospel and Carrying the Cross	113
22. Gospel and Discipleship — Flows from the Cross	118
23. Gospel and Discipleship — Three Enemies	124
24. Gospel and Kingdom of God — Image of God	129
25. Gospel and Kingdom of God — Psalm 8	134
26. Gospel and Kingdom of God — World	141
27. Gospel and Kingdom — Plan of the Ages	147
28. Gospel and Zeak of Lord Almighty	152
29. Gospel and Lamb of God	157
30. Gospel and Bread of Life	163
31. Gospel, Passover and Lord's Supper	169
32. Gospel and Four Spiritual Principles	175

- 33. *Gospel and Spirit of Life* — 1 180
- 34. *Gospel and Spirit of Life* — 2 186
- 35. *Gospel and Holiness of God* — Overview 191
- 36. *Gospel and Holiness of God* — Hallowed be Your Name 197
- 37. *Gospel and Perfecting Holiness* — Overview 203
- 38. *Gospel and Perfecting Holiness* — Misunderstandings 206
- 39. *Gospel and Perfecting Holiness* — Misunderstanding Grace 211
- 40. *Gospel and Union with Christ* — Overview 214
- 41. *Gospel and Union with Christ* — Abiding 217
- 42. *Gospel and Union with Christ* — Pruning 223
- 43. *Gospel and Union with Christ*—Fruit, Friend and Enemy 229
- 44. *Gospel and Grace of God* 233
- 45. *Gospel and Wrath of God* 238
- 46. *Gospel and Worship* — Spirit and Truth 243
- 47. *Gospel and Worship* — Psalm 95 - Entering Rest 248
- 48. *Gospel and Christmas Story* 253
- 49. *Gospel and Genealogy of Jesus* 259
- 50. *Gospel and Presentation of Jesus* 264
- 51. *Gospel and Signs of the Times* 270
- 52. *Gospel and Future Events* 277
- 53. *Gospel and Hell* 280
- 54. *Gospel and Heaven* 288
- 55. *Gospel and Marriage* — Overview 294
- 56. *Gospel and Restoring Shalom* 301
- Appendix 1 — Funeral Service 311

Introduction

1. What is the Spirit saying
2. Response from my colleagues
3. Response from the field
4. Gospel-Centred Preaching

1. My need to hear what the Spirit is saying

In 2020, the pandemic hit the world, bringing us all to a standstill. God was speaking and wanted us to listen. I felt God speak to me through "Seedbed" devotionals by J. D. Walt, mainly as he analysed Barna's research of North American Churches. Walt concludes by saying we need **holy discontent** with where we are in our spiritual walk with God. Walt says,

- *Holy discontent is the distance between the truth one knows and the reality one experiences.*
- *If the gospel's first half is about believing in Jesus, the second half is about becoming like Jesus.*
- *If the first half of the gospel is forgiveness of sin, the second half is freedom from sin.*
- *If the first half of the gospel is coming to faith in Jesus Christ, the second half is growing in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.*
- *Holy discontent is coming to the place where we know that there is more God has for us, that more God wants for us, and that more God wills to do through us, and we know we can no longer settle for anything less.*

2. Response from my colleagues

I felt God leading me to study the gospel and the cross. And that study left me broken and built up simultaneously. Broken by Jesus' love for me and built up in the hope (joyful anticipation of the certainty) of being united with Him in the new creation. I found Jesus drawing my heart closer to Him, gratefully and joyfully. The gospel has now become my daily food, my sustenance. Indeed, Jesus is my daily bread of life. I found His gospel to be a message of freedom, liberation and victory. I shared my quest for Jesus with my friends Bert Cherian and Chandrakant Shourie. God had used these two fine brothers in Christ to start a campus revival during their undergraduate studies in technology in 1980. After that, they spent over 40 years planting churches in India. Bert, Shourie and I formed an open-ended group called "Gospel Collaborators". We invited others to join us in studying and spreading the gospel as it applies to our life. And many did.

3. Response from the field

Among those that joined us was a church planter, Nitin Sardar. He gladly welcomed us to his vast network of rural churches he planted in Central India. We began to teach the gospel to leaders from his churches and other churches. We taught once every week. Each session had teachings on a **gospel-centred life**, followed by questions and answers from the field and prayer — lasting for about two hours. The leaders, in turn, would preach to their congregation every Sunday the gospel message they learned. The response was good. They felt their people were rooted in the gospel, giving them the confidence to share it with their unbelieving neighbours. This book is a collection of my sermons preached to these leaders in India.

Often, church leaders take for granted that their congregation knows and believes the gospel. So, most leaders rarely tend to preach the gospel to the church. However, we all know that our congregation will remember what the pastor is most passionate about. And our congregation will not be passionate about the gospel if we are not passionate about it. But the gospel can change a person's heart — the power of salvation.

My colleague Chandrakant Shourie says, *"The gospel is the power of God for salvation. **But what is my salvation?** My salvation is that God's fullness resides in me. My life is led by the Spirit of God. God's will on earth be done through me. I become more and more like Jesus Christ. That is my salvation, and the gospel is the power of God for my salvation".* Then he prophetically declares, *"God put a burden on our hearts in response to this question. We want to share that burden with you - **"My Gospel is not being taught enough in My church."**"*

4. Gospel-Centred Preaching

By this, I mean to include the gospel in every sermon. If we preach about marriage, we can say that our sinful hearts, with which we were born, will make us selfish even though we may truly love our spouse. So married life, in the long run, will cause some significant problems. But when we look at what Jesus did on the cross for us (the gospel), it breaks our hearts to continue asserting our selfishness. It makes us more like Jesus in our relationship with our spouse. Likewise, we could include the gospel when we preach on any subject in the church. Quoting my colleague Shourie, *"I become more like Jesus Christ. That is my salvation, and the gospel is the power of God for my salvation".*

So, consider the following:

- (i) We should include the gospel every week because it will touch the hearts of our congregation and motivate them to worship God and progress in their discipleship
- (ii) The congregation will soon realise that we are teaching/preaching the gospel in church every week, and we do it better than them. So, they are likely to bring their unchurched friends, co-workers, neighbours and relatives to church to hear the gospel for themselves
- (iii) When we teach/preach the gospel every week, we automatically equip our congregation to evangelise. Often, Christians don't share the gospel because they don't know how. They will eventually get it correctly when they hear their pastor explain the gospel weekly in different settings. Then that equips them to share the gospel themselves
- (iv) The biggest reason to teach/preach the gospel weekly is that it honours Jesus. When we teach/preach the gospel, we bring glory to Christ genuinely. Think about it — the Bible centres around the person and work of Jesus Christ. I think it was Charles Spurgeon who said, "*The Old Testament points to Him; the Gospels unveil Him, the Epistles explain Him, and the book of Revelation exalts Him.*" If the Bible centres around Christ and His cross, shouldn't it be "central" to every one of our sermons? Every subject we touch on, including marriage (Eph 5:25), gets gloriously brighter with the gospel of grace. If we want to see Jesus honoured, our congregation equipped, and our community reached, preaching the gospel-centred life is crucial.
- (v) The gospel is so vital that believers should preach it daily to themselves.

In preparing the sermons, I have referred to resources available in The Gospel Coalition, Gospel in Life, Ligonier Ministries, Desiring God, Bible.org, Mike Bickle Teaching Library, Truth for Life, and others. This collection of sermons will be translated into Hindi and Marathi. We distribute it freely as an ebook.

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August 2023