



Gospel-Centered Discipleship

By Jonathan K. Dodson

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Everyone's idea of discipleship is different. Some people emphasize evangelism—sharing their faith. Still others promote a hierarchical system for spiritual growth, a way for older Christians to pass on best practices to younger believers. Yet, both ideas are incomplete. Real discipleship is so much more.

Avoiding extremes and evaluating motives, Jonathan Dodson insists on a way of following Jesus that re-centers discipleship on the gospel.

This book helps us understand and experience the fullness of discipleship as God intended. It combines the mess and the weight, the imperfection and transformation, the honesty and wonder of being a disciple who revolves around Jesus. Here is a practical guide to discipleship that is Spirit-filled, Christ-centered, field-tested, and easily implemented.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Dodson’s Spirit-led, gospel-centered, organically relational, and authentic book is such a rare jewel. Jonathan is a good friend and an even better ally in the gospel. God has used him to teach me much, and I pray the Spirit will use this book to change the way you view and do discipleship.”

—**Matt Chandler**, Lead Pastor, The Village Church, Dallas, Texas; President, Acts 29 Church Planting Network; author, *The Mingling of Souls* and *The Explicit Gospel*

“Nothing is more central to the global mission of the church than making disciples. This is at the very center of the gospel. *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* captures both the heart of the gospel and the essence of discipleship in the proper order. For too long we’ve put making disciples ahead of a clear understanding of the gospel. In cultures around the world, disciples lean away from the gospel toward religious performance or spiritual license. As a result, disciples burn out or drift from devotion to Jesus. Gospel-Centered Discipleship is an authentic re-centering of discipleship around the gospel of grace, in the context of community, for the mission of God. Don’t miss it!”

—**S. Douglas Birdsall**, Executive Chair, The Lausanne Movement

"Refreshingly honest and realistic, Dodson shares from experience about the struggles and the blessings of making disciples. He does not give us a rule book, but practical teaching that can help every follower of Christ more effectively live out the gospel and the Great Commission."

—**Robert E. Coleman**, Distinguished Senior Professor of Evangelism and Discipleship, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“Every church planter zealously runs into mission with a mandate from Jesus to make disciples of all nations. But what is a disciple? How are they formed? What needs to be done in order for a new church to make disciples? Dodson does a brilliant job of painting a picture of the head, heart, and hands of a disciple, as well as addressing how they are formed. This book provides a clear target for the church planter’s mission to make disciples.”

—**Scott Thomas**, Founder, Gospel Coach; coauthor, *Gospel Coach: Shepherding Leaders to Glorify God*

“Jonathan strips away a stagnant view of discipleship and replaces it with something so refreshingly honest and deep, you find yourself craving it. This book will redefine all of your relationships with depth and transparency and Christ-centeredness. This isn’t just God’s design for discipleship—it’s how we were designed to live. Jonathan just took discipleship from the spiritually elite to dorm rooms and neighborhoods and coffee shops.”

—**Jennie Allen**, Founder and Visionary, IF:Gathering; author, *Anything* and *Restless*

“Jonathan Dodson is the real deal! After reading the prequel to this book, we asked Jonathan to speak at our annual meeting. He blew us away with his grasp of the gospel and discipleship! If you want to take a deep dive into the mystery and joy of the gospel, this is the book for you. Jonathan will help you fight to keep the gospel the gospel. He will show you how to avoid the traps of performance and license. He will show you how to avoid believing a lie. And, most of all, he will help you to taste the sweetness of Jesus.”

—**Patrick Morley**, author, *The Man in the Mirror*; CEO, Man in the Mirror

“Jonathan has done us a huge favor in writing this book. As I read it, a growing passion to fight sin grew within me. I want to be a card-carrying member of a ‘Fight Club’ so that in community we can take sin

seriously, encourage one another to believe the gospel deeply, and pray for each other to respond to the Holy Spirit passionately. What else can I say? This is an excellent book. Buy it. Read it. Do it.”

—**Steve Timmis**, Executive Director, Acts 29 Church Planting Network

“With all of the talk of gospel-centeredness these days, I’m thankful to see Jonathan unpack this topic with a clear, compelling, Spirit-empowered approach. He goes beyond just answering the question: ‘What is gospel-centered?’ to help us see how the gospel of grace really works in the details of everyday life. His clarification of the unhealthy divide between evangelism and discipleship will bring about a more holistic approach to gospel-centered discipleship. I know Jonathan and respect the fact that these are not just concepts or theories, but truths coming out of the practice of his own disciple-making ministry. I trust that this book will serve to further advance the work of discipleship that has the gospel of grace as its foundation.”

—**Jeff Vanderstelt**, Visionary Leader, Soma; Pastor, Doxa Church, Bellevue, Washington; author, *Saturate*

“Jonathan cuts to the heart of the discipleship crisis we are facing by showing us that discipleship isn’t an optional response to Jesus. Rather, it’s embracing ‘a whole way of following Jesus Christ as Lord in the whole of life.’ This book will stir your heart and awaken in you the places the Good News is calling to reflect the likeness of Jesus. On top of this, his ‘grace agenda’ will push you to live out the multiplying principle we see at work in the Great Commission.”

—**Mike Breen**, Global Leader, 3DM; author, *Building a Discipleship Culture*

“One of the most healthy trends in the church today is a renewed focus on ‘making disciples.’ Jonathan Dodson has added an invaluable contribution to that trend. He makes it clear that making disciples must be gospel-centered and must take place in community. But he not only reminds us that this is what should be happening, he tells us how to actually make it happen. This book will give you a practical and proven approach that can work in your ministry setting. Read it carefully, both for its biblical challenge and its hands on approach to ministry.”

—**Stephen E. Smallman**, Assistant Pastor, New Life Presbyterian Church, Glenside, Pennsylvania; Instructor, CityNet Ministries of Philadelphia; author, *Spiritual Birthline*, *Forty Days on the Mountain*, and *The Walk*

“For the longest time, I have been hoping to see two books on discipleship. The first would be a practical resource for churches that, on the one hand, was serious about the kind of discipleship and accountability that are necessary for Christian growth and yet, on the other hand, would put forth the gospel of grace, not legalistic self-improvement, as the key to change. The second book I’ve wished for is one that would situate the task of discipleship specifically within the missional calling of the church. I was thrilled to discover that Jonathan Dodson has managed to write both of these books in one. In *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, Jonathan pulls together all these different themes—gospel, mission, discipleship, church, and Spirit—into an integrated whole. And quite honestly, I don’t know a better person for that task.”

—**Abraham Cho**, Assistant Pastor, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York

“I am grateful for Jonathan Dodson’s new book *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*. He masterfully took the truth and beauty of the gospel and pushed it into an area of Christendom that is typically performance driven. I came away from this book understanding how to think about discipleship in a new way. I also love that the book isn’t just theory; Dodson has clearly lived what he is teaching. The truth in this book has built my love for the Holy Spirit. It has challenged my thinking on community and discipleship. And it has effectively pushed my comprehension of the gospel to a new level.”

—**Jessica Thompson**, author, *Everyday Grace*; coauthor, *Give Them Grace*

“Dodson writes with conviction and leaves the reader with important truths and responses to ponder. There is

nothing cheap about the gospel he promotes. In fact, it's all about the Jesus whom we profess and the Father we adore, who lead us to a life of victory in God's Spirit. Read *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* with an open heart and a willing spirit to sustain you!"

—**Stephen A. Macchia**, Director, Pierce Center for Disciple-Building, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; author, *Becoming A Healthy Disciple*

"What is often vague or implied in the phrase 'gospel-centered,' is rendered clear and convincing by Jonathan Dodson. Here is the practical how-to of heart change, teaching how souls are changed and not simply their wanton behaviors. The tools are all here: what we need to know, think, do, and most essentially *believe* about the gospel to live as a new creatures in Christ. This fills in the practical gaps of gospel-centered discipleship and gospel-centered living."

—**Rick James**, Publisher, CruPress; author, *Jesus Without Religion*

"One of the greatest challenges facing the missional movement is for disciples to ground their identity in the gospel, not in their mission. *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* clearly shows how true discipleship starts with a new identity in Christ, not a new behavior for Christ. It is saturated with deep truth and is as practical as it is informational. This book is a game-changer."

—**Brandon Hatmaker**, author, *Barefoot Church*; Pastor, Austin New Church, Austin, Texas

"Jonathan knows that discipleship is of strategic importance in terms of the vitality, sustainability, and impact of the church. He also knows that to be true disciples we must become more like Jesus or else degenerate into religious ideology. *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* is a really helpful and fertile book for a critical time."

—**Alan Hirsch**, Founder, Forge and Future Travelers; award winning author, *Untamed, Right Here Right Now*, and *ReJesus*

"If in your struggle against sin you've been beaten up by the duty-bound, legalistic, moralistic methods of contemporary discipleship or enslaved by the licentious approach to holiness by proponents of cheap grace, then *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* is for you! Dodson calls us to join the fight against sin, legalism, and license by believing everything the gospel says about who God is for us in Christ, and how he is conforming us to the image of His Son. Read this book. Form a 'club.' And begin fighting sin for the glory of God and your joy in Christ."

—**Juan R. Sanchez**, Senior Pastor, High Pointe Baptist Church, Austin, Texas; author, *I Peter for You* and *Gracia Sobre Gracia*

"I am a big fan of Jonathan Dodson and grateful for this book. The church is desperate for this vision of grace-based, gospel-centered discipleship. I know I am! The guilt-ridden, shame-based, discipleship trail I stumbled on for years left me tired, defeated, and self-righteous. The discovery of gospel-centrality in my journey as a disciple and in making disciples, like this book reinforces and lays out so beautifully, saved my life, gave me hope, and, quite simply, changed everything. Gospel-centered sanctification and gospel-centered ecclesiology are like two lost continents to the current church. Thanks, Jonathan, for your work to help blaze the trail!"

—**John Wiley Bryson**, Co-Founder and Teaching Pastor, Fellowship Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee; Leadership Coach, Fellowship Associates

"A timely book about gospel-centered accountability in an age of anonymity and shallow relationships. Dodson has done a masterful job highlighting how the Holy Spirit uses gospel truth to give us new, Christ-centered affections that dispel our thirst for sin. Moreover, he helps us see how we can come alongside each other to unearth the deeper heart-idols that drive our more obvious sins. For those still playing at religion through superficial, pseudo-accountability, this book is a welcome killjoy. You'll never look at accountability

the same way again.”

—**Luke Gilkerson**, Internet Director, Covenant Eyes; blogger, Breaking Free

“*Gospel-Centered Discipleship* is a breath of fresh air. Dodson does an excellent job of combining theology and praxis. Highly recommended for those seeking to build a discipleship culture in their church.”

—**Jon Tyson**, Acting Parish Pastor, Trinity Grace Church, New York, New York

About the Author

Jonathan K. Dodson (MDiv and ThM, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) is the lead pastor of City Life Church in Austin, Texas, where he lives with his wife and three children. Dodson is the founder of GospelCenteredDiscipleship.com and author of a number of books.

Matt Chandler (BA, Hardin-Simmons University) serves as lead pastor of teaching at the Village Church in Dallas, Texas, and president of the Acts 29 Network. He lives in Texas with his wife, Lauren, and their three children.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gail Tate:

The book *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* can give more knowledge and information about everything you want. So just why must we leave the great thing like a book *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*? A number of you have a different opinion about reserve. But one aim this book can give many data for us. It is absolutely suitable. Right now, try to closer using your book. Knowledge or facts that you take for that, you could give for each other; it is possible to share all of these. Book *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* has simple shape but you know: it has great and large function for you. You can appearance the enormous world by available and read a guide. So it is very wonderful.

Harry Dwyer:

A lot of people always spent their own free time to vacation as well as go to the outside with them family or their friend. Do you know? Many a lot of people spent many people free time just watching TV, or maybe playing video games all day long. If you want to try to find a new activity that's look different you can read a new book. It is really fun to suit your needs. If you enjoy the book that you simply read you can spent all day long to reading a e-book. The book *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* it is quite good to read. There are a lot of people who recommended this book. These folks were enjoying reading this book. In the event you did not have enough space to bring this book you can buy often the e-book. You can m0ore simply to read this book from a smart phone. The price is not to cover but this book has high quality.

Lewis Shafer:

Precisely why? Because this *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* is an unordinary book that the inside of the e-book waiting for you to snap that but latter it will shock you with the secret that inside. Reading this book

adjacent to it was fantastic author who have write the book in such remarkable way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This excellent book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book possess such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I have been you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

Angie Blakney:

Reading a book to become new life style in this year; every people loves to study a book. When you examine a book you can get a lot of benefit. When you read books, you can improve your knowledge, simply because book has a lot of information in it. The information that you will get depend on what kinds of book that you have read. If you need to get information about your research, you can read education books, but if you act like you want to entertain yourself you are able to a fiction books, these us novel, comics, in addition to soon. The Gospel-Centered Discipleship will give you new experience in looking at a book.

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