

CONTENTS

Why This Book?	9
1 THE GOSPEL EVERY DAY	17
A Quick Overview of the Gospel Eight.	19
Awareness of Sin.	25
Digging Deeper.	31
2 REPENTANCE: A SWEET GIFT	33
True Repentance.	35
False Repentance	43
Digging Deeper.	49
3 RESTORATION OF RELATIONSHIP	51
Restoration	53
Isolation	59
Digging Deeper.	69
4 RENEWED IDENTITY: CHILD VS. ORPHAN	71
Living as His Child.	73
Living as an Orphan	85
Digging Deeper.	94
5 RESPONDING TO SIN	97
A Child Responds to Sin—through Repentance.	99
An Orphan Responds to Sin—through Self-Reliance ..	105
Digging Deeper.	111

6 REST OR RESIST	113
Truths That Transform	117
Digging Deeper	126
7 REAL LIFE AND THE CYCLE OF GRACE	131
Swimming in the Gospel	135
The Purpose of Our Adoption	139
Digging Deeper	144
Drawing the Gospel Eight Diagram	145
Starting a New Life	151
Using This Book with a Group	155
Recommended Reading	157
Notes	159
About the Author	161
About the Gospel Eight Diagram	161
Acknowledgments	163



1

THE GOSPEL EVERY DAY

The **gospel** is the doorway to our salvation, the essential truths we need to believe about Jesus in order to be saved. And yet it is also much, much, more! **It's not just the doorway; it's also the pathway.** It is every promise, every fact, every attribute of God, and everything we need to know, understand, and experience about God and His grace. As described in Ephesians 1, the gospel encompasses every spiritual blessing that we have in Christ. That's why the word *gospel* literally means *good news*. Indeed it is!



Child of God

RESTORATION

DEFINED BY

He is... I am...

forgiver	+	forgiven
Redeemer		redeemed
Savior healer		saved healed
provider		provided for
defender		defended
lover		loved

Rest in the Gospel? or Resist



REPENT

RESIST

DEFINED BY

• PAIN • PAST • CIRCUMSTANCES

I was... I am...

rejected	bitter
abused	lonely
controlled	controlling
judged	afraid
hurt	angry




ISOLATION



FALSE GODS

Orphan

A QUICK **OVERVIEW** of the GOSPEL EIGHT



The Gospel Eight diagram reflects what the process of repenting and believing looks like in our lives. This is a fluid process, and so you will notice little arrows that indicate movement around the diagram. These arrows represent God's grace and His relentless pursuit of us. You will also notice that, no matter where you might be "standing" in this diagram, His grace is always propelling you, moving you back into relationship with Him.

Looking at the diagram, you can see there really is no beginning and no end. Since it's a cycle and a process, anywhere you start will be "jumping in midstream." But we have to start somewhere, so let's begin with the top part of the diagram that

reflects the ideal of a believer's relationship with God as Father. As Christians, we enjoy all the spiritual blessings offered to us in the gospel. As His children, our identity is based on who He is, not who we are. Secure in the Father's love, we delight in sharing with others and inviting them to join the journey. The diagram has no beginning and no end; it's a cycle and a process.



Even as His children, we fail miserably. If I'm honest, I know I'm constantly confronted with my inadequacy and sin. Like a mirror, God uses His Word, the Holy Spirit, and the community of believers to expose my unbelief and the way sin has power over me.



Burdened by this reality, the intersection of the two circles reflects the choice where we decide what we will do with the growing awareness of our sin and the accompanying shame and pain it brings. How will I respond when I feel the weight of my sin? I can repent and run to the cross, or I can resist and turn away from the cross.

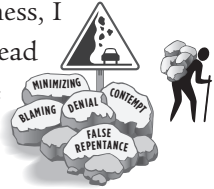


In repentance I find full forgiveness that restores me to an intimate fellowship with God. Some have referred to this top portion of the diagram as the Cycle of Faith—a repetitive cycle of repenting and believing, repenting and believing. **This is preaching the gospel to yourself.**

Oh, if only it were this easy! Unfortunately, my heart is easily derailed. Perhaps Satan plants a seed of doubt large enough to make me suspicious of God and His intentions for me. Or maybe I simply mistrust God's plan. Or maybe I


just feel like I'm not really that bad. For whatever reason, I convince myself I can handle my sin and my pain on my own and don't really need Him.

Although I am aware of my sin and brokenness, I bypass the cross, resist repentance, and instead head down a path of false repentance that leads me away from God (and into the bottom circle of the diagram).



On this downward path, I develop clever schemes to “manage my sin.” From the outside, managing my sin can look like repentance, but it's not. It's false repentance.

False repentance is looking to something else to take away the shame, guilt, and consequences of my sin.

I might do this by blame-shifting, beating myself up, denying my sin, minimizing my sin, or trying to “fix it” on my own by self-effort and trying harder. But all of these lead me further away from God. I *feel* more and more isolated and  separated from Him. I end up living a life more characteristic of a spiritual orphan than God's child.¹

Instead of finding my identity in Christ and what He has done for me, as in the top circle, my identity as a spiritual orphan is defined by my pain, my past, and my circumstances. Life as an orphan robs me of hope, freedom, acceptance, and joy. It leaves me with precisely the life Satan would have me live—one that is disconnected from Christ and that feels spiritually sterile and wearisome.

As a result, since I've rejected the righteousness that Christ

Idols are a cheap substitute for Christ; they all disappoint in the end.

has given me, I strive to establish my own (like the Israelites, Romans 10:3). I do this by propping myself up with anything that gives me value and fulfills my need for acceptance. The Bible calls these things idols.

Idols are a cheap substitute for Christ. They may work for a little while, but they all disappoint in the end. At some point I realize

these idols don't deliver and are actually sucking the life out of me. They are driving me further from Christ and the life He intended. Once again, like a mirror, God's Word, the Holy Spirit, and the community of faith help me realize my brokenness and my need for a Savior.



Now I face the same choice. I can run to the cross and be restored through repentance and faith, or I can resist the cross and continue managing my sin on my own, living like an orphan, and settling for cheap substitutes instead of the real thing.

This cycle is repeated, over and over, in my life as a Christian. As I am confronted with my sin, I can run to the cross, **repent**, and believe the gospel, or I can **resist** the cross and live like a spiritual orphan.

A Christian's position as a child of God doesn't change. All of us experience ups and downs in the cycle of faith. There will be times when my faith is strong, repentance is real, and I live more in the reality of who I am as His child. Then there will be times when my faith is weak, my heart not convinced

that He loves me, and I will live as if I were a spiritual orphan.

Those who have not yet asked Christ to forgive their sins are doomed to spin around in the bottom circle, desperately seeking ways to manage their pain and brokenness. They crave acceptance and fulfillment but seek it in what the world has to offer instead of finding it in the grace and faith offered through the cross. (To learn more, see “Starting a New Life” at the end of this book.)

This diagram shows both the believer and the nonbeliever that the solution to our despair is the same: we both need to run to the cross and put our faith and trust in what Jesus has already done for us.

Recently a friend’s Facebook status said, **“If the gospel is not the best news you have ever heard, then you have misunderstood the gospel.”** I have no idea of the original source of this statement, but I love it! The gospel really does change everything! It changes my position in Christ, gives me a new identity, allows me to enjoy life as His child, gives me all the blessings and benefits of being in His family, and infuses me with a purpose for living that is greater than myself.



These next few pages will help you understand this process in a little more detail. I hope that as God makes the gospel even more real in your life, this diagram will give you a way to share what you are learning with others and that God will use it in your own life to shorten the gap between your head and your heart!



AWARENESS OF **SIN**

God always seems to get our attention. Whenever I think I'm doing fine handling life on my own, somehow, somehow, He manages to show up and force me to deal with my sin. He's like a full-length mirror that follows us around from room to room. We can ignore it for a while, but eventually we are forced to take a close look and see every flaw and blemish—all the ways we don't measure up to His perfect standard, the law.

That mirror of God's holiness can take a couple of different forms. As my view of God expands, so will my awareness of sin. He will use multiple means to show me my sin. He will expose my unbelief through His **Word** (Romans 3:20), through the

Holy Spirit (John 16:8–9), and through the **community of faith** (Galatians 6:1).

Sin is about more than just behavior. We sin because we are sinful.

But what is it we are actually seeing in this mirror? If you were to write a definition of sin, what would you say? When I was a teenager, I had a youth pastor who challenged us to go a whole day without sinning. I look back and now realize that he had a very small definition of sin. For him, sin was all about actions. His definition included a lot of “behavioral” words that communicated “not measuring up,” “falling short,” “disobedience,” “rebellious against God,” etc.

We prefer thinking about sin in terms of behavior/performance/actions. It’s easier that way. It allows me to do two things: I can focus on specific sins and “deal with them.” Then when I have cleaned up that area of my life, I can move on and work on something else. It keeps things nice and tidy, not messy and overwhelming.

Second, if I focus on sin as only a set of behaviors, then it gives me a justified way of puffing myself up. I can usually turn around and find someone who is more messed up than I am. What a relief! Besides, if actions and performance are the only measure, then honestly, some days I do okay. You could follow me around and you would see me interacting with friends, spending time with my kids, taking care of my family, and serving others. If sin is just bad behavior, then some days I’m doin’ mighty fine!

But sin is about more than just behavior. Our sinful behaviors flow out of sinners' hearts. We sin because we are sinful. The danger of focusing only on the external actions is that as long as we maintain a small view of sin, then we will believe in a small cross and a small Jesus. It's a convenient way to keep Him at arm's length.

The result of the fall is not only that we are separated from God, but that we are also corrupt—tainted through and through. Even our best efforts are still marred by sin.

Let's pretend I am offering you a piping hot, melt-in-your-mouth Ghirardelli chocolate brownie with added chocolate chips (yum!). There's just one catch. Right before I give it to you, I put a drop of cyanide on the corner. Just a drop. You know exactly where it is, so you can eat around it. Would you eat it? Probably not. For a large amount of money? Maybe. You might convince yourself that you could break off that corner and still be able to eat a portion of the brownie from the opposite side without being hurt by the cyanide.

That's kind of how we often view our sin. *It has just corrupted a piece of us; a corner of my heart, but not the whole thing.* If I am diligent enough I can, with surgical precision, remove the parts that are corrupted by sin while the rest remains unscathed. What an inaccurate view! This view of sin keeps it manageable. Not only can I compartmentalize it, but it allows me to compare myself with others—and gloat.

A better analogy would be this: imagine that deliciously thick brownie mixture before it gets poured into the pan.

While it is in the bowl, I add some cyanide, stir it in, and then bake the brownies. Would you eat them now? No way! The risk is simply too great. The batter has been completely corrupted by the cyanide, and it has worked its way into the entire brownie. Even with surgical precision, there would be no way to extract only the contaminated areas.

This is what we are up against in our battle with sin. Sin has infiltrated and corrupted every aspect of our hearts. There is no area that has escaped the damaging effects of the fall. We are completely tainted with sin. It's not just that a part of me is sinful, and so I sin. *I sin because I am sinful*. Sin is so much more than just behavior.

Romans 1 gives us a pretty detailed picture of just how deep the rabbit hole goes, and verses 28–32 (NIV-1984) point out how desperate we are outside of Christ:

Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Although any definition of sin would include a list of behaviors like those in this passage, sin goes much deeper than what we do. If we miss this, then we put ourselves on a path that will continually keep the beauty of the gospel of grace *just out of reach*.

Romans 14:23 gives us an even broader definition of sin: “Everything that does not come from faith is sin.” This is a game changer. It challenges my definition of sin and expands it to include all of my unbelief. The reality is that *all* sin is rooted in unbelief. We are constantly bumping up against the wall of our unbelief and lack of trust in the gospel.

Our unbelief shows up everywhere, such as when I

- *listen to lies that say that I'm not lovable*
- *believe that a promotion will solve my problems*
- *turn to food, alcohol, prescription drugs, or pornography to numb my pain*
- *work harder to earn God's favor*
- *use excessive dieting and exercise to satisfy deeper cravings*
- *need others to “need me” in order to feel loved*
- *have to control people and circumstances*
- *can't say no for fear of letting others down*
- *am anxious*
- *am critical of others*
- *look in the mirror and hate what I see*
- *demand perfection from my children*
- *live for the approval of others*
- *beat myself up over my failure*

Our unbelief is ever-present, and so often we don't even realize it. It shows up in the choices we make, the idols we construct, and the perspectives we have on our circumstances. This brief list is just the beginning.

In the same way the gospel **changes** everything, our unbelief **corrupts** everything. I love how Paul David Tripp describes the beauty of being made aware of our sin and unbelief. He says, "Accurate self-assessment is the product of grace. It is only in the mirror of God's Word and with the sight-giving help of the Holy Spirit that we are able to see ourselves as we actually are."² Until we see ourselves clearly, we will never understand the sweet gift of grace we have been given.