



Picturing the Gospel: Tapping the Power of the Bible's Imagery

By Neil Livingstone

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In our image-based culture, people need to visualize something to understand it. This has never been more true about our communication of the gospel. But sometimes our understanding of the gospel gets stuck in a rut, and all we know is a particular outline or one-size-fits-all formula. While we hold to only one gospel, the New Testament uses a wealth of dynamic, compelling images for explaining the good news of Jesus, each of which connects with different people at different points of need. Neil Livingstone provides a guided tour of biblical images of the gospel and shows how each offers fresh insight into God's saving work. Walking through Scripture's gallery of pictures of salvation from new life to deliverance, from justification to adoption, Livingstone invites us to deepen our understanding of the gospel. By letting the truth and power of each permeate our lives, we will be better able to articulate the life-changing gospel of Christ to a world that needs to taste--and see--that the Lord is good.

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Editorial Review

Review

Livingstone's aim is to open up the true nature of the Gospel to us so that it can change the way we do Christianity. Yet his vision of the Gospel is 3-dimensional and only an aesthetic journey into the intersection of heaven and earth can help us begin to grasp its contours. (Phil Sumpter on Chrisendom, April 2, 2008)

Livingstone uses narrative to enliven afresh those biblical word pictures that repetition has sucked dry. (Youth Worker Journal, July-August 2007)

I'm particularly impressed with how Livingstone is able to tie these images and themes together throughout the Bible rather than simply list verses. At the same time he is exploring the imagery, he is mining the Biblical resources and making application to real persons. . . . Above all, Livingstone never loses sight of another set of images: people who need the Gospel in different ways. (Michael Spencer, internetmonk.com, April 25, 2007)

"How can the lives of Christ's followers become gospel tapestries? Neil Livingstone weaves the life-struggles of contemporary Americans together with biblical images of salvation in order to exemplify what it means to incarnate the good news. Readers will be challenged not only to know about the life-transforming power of the gospel but genuinely to embody it." (Joel B. Green, professor of New Testament interpretation, Asbury Theological Seminary, and author of Recovering the Scandal of the Cross)

"Too often we limit the gospel to one aspect of life. Neil Livingstone walks us through a number of the Bible's powerful portraits of God's work in a way that enriches our life and witness." (Tremper Longman III, Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies, Westmont College, and author of Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind)

"Since the early church first began to present the gospel as an apologetic that corresponded to the philosophical categories of Greek thought, we have tried to reduce biblical truths to constructs. Our earliest creeds necessarily followed this approach. But such constructs do not always capture the heart or move us deeper into the journey of faith. Though this approach was not entirely wrong we missed a whole range of biblical meanings that corresponded more closely with the imagery actually employed by the biblical writers themselves. Neil Livingstone gives us a thrilling book that shows us practically how to expand the way we present the gospel, first to ourselves and then to outsiders. This is an inspiring and fruitful book that will foster a needed rethinking of how we share Christ. I heartily commend it." (John H. Armstrong, president, ACT 3, Carol Stream, Illinois)

"The gospel is never less; it's always more. By expanding the metaphors and rationalities with which we understand and explain the gospel, Neil Livingstone does the church (and the world) a great service. Without disparaging propositional truth, he adds a layer of aesthetic truth, and in so doing, exhibits the beauty of the good news." (Tony Jones, national coordinator of Emergent Village (www.emergentvillage.com), and author of The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life)

About the Author

Neil Livingstone (M.A., theology, Fuller Theological Seminary) is the area director for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in metropolitan Washington, D.C. He previously served as a campus staff member with

InterVarsity.

Brian McLaren is founding pastor of Cedar Ridge Community Church in the Baltimore-Washington region. He is the author of numerous books including *A New Kind of Christian*, *A Generous Orthodoxy* and *Finding Our Way Again*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Snyder:

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