

A 30-DAY DEVOTIONAL

CHOSEN



WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU REMINDED YOURSELF
OF THE GOSPEL EVERY DAY?

RYAN SKOOG AND MATT BROWN

OUTREACH®

Chosen

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To our parents—

Tim and Melody,

Mark and Tami

—who intentionally shared the Gospel with us at a young age and continue to practice resurrection in their daily lives.

And to our children—

Caden and Jordan,

Colin and Sydney

—may you know the supreme joy in life that comes from knowing the Lord and preaching the Gospel to your own heart every day.

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ENDORSEMENTS

“Matt and Ryan shed light on a life-changing question: how might our lives be different if we took time every day to intentionally focus our hearts and minds on the Gospel? Through rich story-telling they invite pastors, ministry leaders, and all Christ-followers to awaken to the power of the Gospel, reminding them that the Gospel transforms our lives every day. This is a book you will not only read for yourself, but share with many others as a gift of encouragement on their journey with Jesus.”

—Jason Daye, Host of the ChurchLeaders podcast,
Director of ministry partnerships at Outreach

“One of the greatest promises in the Bible is knowing that we are chosen by God. That the Creator of the universe chooses us! You and me. What does that fully mean? This book is for you. Matt Brown and Ryan Skoog explain the Gospel and what it simply yet fully means to be chosen by God.”

—Adam Weber, Pastor & Author of
Talking With God

INTRODUCTION

“The most transformative message to reach our lives is the Gospel! I’ve personally experienced how easy it is to lose sight of the power and impact of this message, which is why this book is essential! The authors live the gospel and you can feel that on every page and in every story! Great for anyone just starting their walk with Jesus, new members, a series with your groups, or anyone wanting to stir up their spiritual passion again!”

—Samuel Death, speaker, author of *Following Jesus*

“Maybe we, as Jesus’ followers, would get more excited about sharing his Gospel with others if we grasped it better ourselves. This delightful new devotional recounts story after powerful story to remind us of just how *GREAT* the Good News really is—for ourselves, and for everyone we know.”

—Mark Mittelberg, primary author of the bestselling *Becoming a Contagious Christian* training course, and coauthor of *Making Your Case for Christ* (with Lee Strobel)

What would happen if you woke up and reminded yourself of the Gospel every day?

If you are like me, you are tempted to take the Gospel for granted and stop rehearsing it because it’s become so familiar. We store it in our story somewhere in the past and subconsciously try to move on from it. But we need to hear the Gospel every bit as much today as we did the day we heard it for the first time.

If we remind ourselves of the Gospel each morning, we will wake up and live in grateful joy that the toughest battle we are going to face today has already been won.

How different would your life be if you preached the Gospel to your own heart more regularly? Speaker and author Paul Tripp said, “Preach the gospel to yourself. No one is more influential in your life than you are. Because no one talks to you more than you do.”

We wrote this book to help you influence yourself better—to talk to yourself more about Jesus.

BEST MORNING EVER

I believe the best way to change your life is simply to change your normal day. This is how reminding my soul of the Gospel every morning has changed my life:

- When I remember how God has included me in His family, I don't look for acceptance in everyone I meet throughout the day.
- When I remind myself of how passionately God loves me, I don't look for love from social-media "likes" or compliments throughout the day.
- When I realize I am blessed for all eternity, I don't seek happiness in other things or people.
- When I remind myself that I have been chosen by God, I don't go through the day looking for people's approval.
- When I remind my soul I have already won the most important victory ever, I don't base my self-worth on accomplishing every goal, impressing every person, or winning every argument.
- When I realize that God has given me His complete attention because of Christ, I don't go around seeking people's attention.

- When I realize the price Jesus paid to set me free, I don't have to find my worth in things and titles. I don't have to find people to invite me into their circle; I've already been invited by God into His elect circle.

The result is joy. I walk through much more of my day in a state of grateful obedience—grateful for what Christ has done and wanting to obediently serve Him throughout the day.

This book will help you each morning to walk through these different gifts of the Gospel that can completely change the outlook of your day. And if you change your day, it can change your entire life.

THE BOOK BEHIND THIS BOOK

The Bible has much to say about the Gospel. If you want to learn to preach the Gospel to yourself, you have to let God's Word preach the Gospel to you. The Gospel is the story of Jesus Christ, who came to earth, lived a sinless life, gave His life on a brutal cross as a ransom for our sins, and rose from the dead three days later. He now sits at the right hand of the Father as the Name Above All Names. All of Scripture points to this Christ and this good news.

As different as we all are, we all need the same grace—the same Savior. We all deserve shame, wrath, and hell, but Jesus offers us grace, hope, and heaven. The Gospel beckons us to confess our sin and our need for Christ, and to believe in and receive what He did on the cross for us. When we do this, we become a child of God with countless spiritual benefits—benefits freely given by the grace and mercy of our Father.

And we will always need the Gospel. We do not get saved by the Gospel and then move on to discipleship, attempting to live our Christian lives out of our own power. The entirety of our Christian life is built on the Gospel. The Gospel not only saves us, it also sustains us throughout our lives. The Gospel fuels and motivates us to serve and obey God every step of the way. We will never be perfect, and so we will always rely on what Christ has done for us—which means we will always need to be reminded of what He has done for us.

Too many Christians are famished for the Gospel. Too many of us are living our lives without grasping the giant potential and overwhelming wonder of everything God does for us in the Gospel. Losing sight of the Gospel negatively affects our faith in countless ways. We need to preach and preach and preach the Gospel to our hearts—the Gospel we find in the Bible.

YOU NEVER OUTGROW THE GOSPEL

You probably haven't experienced all the benefits or "aspects" of the Gospel yet. There are dozens of ways the Gospel positively impacts and shapes our everyday lives. We all need regular reminders of these aspects and need God's power to grasp them more. If we don't understand the benefits, they can't change our lives or grow our faith.

The Gospel dramatically affects our daily lives. The Gospel is not some pie-in-the-sky theory; it's down-to-earth truth about Jesus that affects our real lives on a daily basis and influences us in profound ways. The Gospel has the power to change everything in our daily lives if we let it—our attitudes, our motivations, our desires, our goals, our actions, our interactions with others. This starts with preaching the Gospel to our own hearts—coming to understand it better, being reminded of it regularly, and letting it fill our hearts with wonder.

None of us has looked deeply enough. It's not that we have heard the Gospel too much; we haven't *really* heard it enough yet! Like many facets to a beautiful diamond, the Gospel has an infinite beauty that can never be exhausted. The more we look into the Gospel, the stronger and more satisfied we will be in our faith.

My grandfather-in-law was a pastor for fifty years, and he had the habit of reading the whole Bible every year. He would often say, “That verse was never in there before!” When we stay in God’s Word, He will open up our hearts to different truths at different times, even while we read the same pages over and over. This Book meets us right where we are and speaks to us in just the way we need right now. As Charles Spurgeon, one of the most highly influential preachers of his time, said, “Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the book widens and deepens with our years.” It is the same with the Gospel story Scripture is telling—nobody ever outgrows the Gospel.

THE STORY BEHIND THIS BOOK

I met Ryan Skoog years ago when I was a student at summer camp. He was traveling in a band and also happened to be a counselor that week for me and a group of friends. I still remember the stories he shared each night about the Gospel transforming lives. Those stories were pivotal in my faith. They painted pictures in my imagination of just how powerful the Gospel really is.

Ryan and I have stayed in touch over the years and have enjoyed a friendship. About a year ago, Ryan approached me with the idea for this book, wanting to help Christians preach the Gospel to their hearts each day. This simple idea—rehearsing and meditating on the benefits of the Gospel—has changed our lives in profound ways. Our hope is that as you read, we can be camp counselors for you, sitting together around a campfire, inspiring you with real-life stories of how we’ve seen God working in people’s lives through this incredible Gospel. We want you to see how regularly reminding your own heart of the Gospel can transform your walk with God.

We have written this book in a thirty-day format, with thirty benefits of the Gospel to preach to your own heart, all drawn from the Bible. But we also tell a lot of personal stories that illustrate the benefits in real people’s stories. (We have changed the names of the people in the stories to protect their identity and security; many of them serve in places where it is not safe to share the Gospel.) We do not want to weigh you down with burdensome doctrine but will introduce you to life-changing truths that will refresh and transform your life. We

want to help you understand and grasp more of the Gospel in practical, everyday terms.

My wife is a real-estate agent and has to write and review lots of legal documents and then translate them for her clients. We call the uncommon terms normal people don't understand "legalese." Doctrines like justification and propitiation are biblical aspects of the Gospel, but many of us do not understand and grasp words like these. We have intentionally written this in a way that we hope is easy for anyone to understand, and we use stories to help you make sense of (and remember!) difficult but beautiful benefits of the Gospel. *Chosen* is broken into an introductory day and a closing day, with four weeks of devotions in between. Whether you are reading this on your own, or going through it with your church or a small group, we hope this format will really connect with and challenge you in a practical way to dive deep into the Gospel and practice preaching it to yourself each day.

THE GREATEST HABIT

We need regular reminders of all God has done for us in the Gospel, because the Gospel fuels and motivates our desire to obey God and to serve Him. When we see how

much He has done—how much He has given us in His Son—we cannot help but be changed and motivated to give Him our whole lives. And even while we are weak and feeble sinners struggling to follow a perfect Savior, the Gospel reminds us how loved we are and how much God is working in us to help us follow Him.

Author Jerry Bridges said, "The greatest habit any Christian can have is to preach the gospel to their own heart every day."

There is no greater need in your Christian life than regularly reminding your own heart of the truth of the Gospel.

—Matt Brown and Ryan Skoog

1

WE HAVE A BRIGHT FUTURE IN JESUS CHRIST

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has
anointed me to proclaim good news
to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim
freedom for the prisoners.*

—Luke 4:18

My friend Mr. Bai was a professor at Beijing University, known as “the Harvard of China.” He once famously lay down in front of the iron gates at the entrance of the school to prevent students from leaving the campus to join a potentially dangerous protest. Mr. Bai knew the danger and told the students they would have to dishonor him and step over his body to join the protest. Most of the students stayed back. The protests that night sparked the massacre of Tiananmen Square. Mr. Bai’s heroics saved scores of students’ lives.

However, he made a joke in class about the Communist party to a group of students. One of those students reported Mr. Bai’s joke to the police. The next day officers burst into Mr. Bai’s office and brought him to a remote, cold Communist prison—without warning, without a trial.

He woke up that morning as a professor chairing one of the most prestigious academic positions in the world. By nightfall, he was behind bars in prison. Chinese prisons at this time were some of the worst places on earth—horrible lairs of disease, torture, and death. Mr. Bai quickly plunged into depression and despair. His depression led to thoughts of suicide over the course of weeks. One afternoon, in a cloud of sadness, he brought himself to the window of his eighth-story prison cell. The Chinese did not put windows in the higher floors of prison cells. If a prisoner decided to throw himself to his death, it was not a problem.

Mr. Bai’s heart raced as he looked out and thought of jumping. And then it happened. He heard a small voice say, “Don’t go. Don’t go. Don’t go.” He sat down in the middle of his cell, desperate.

There on the hard concrete floor, strange memories flooded his mind. A friend of his, a foreign professor who was a Christian, had shared the Gospel with

him. This friend had walked him through the story of Christ—how He took the burden of our sins on the cross and in turn offered forgiveness and a new life starting now in this world and going on forever in heaven.

Mr. Bai prayed, “Jesus, if You are real, please bring me this forgiveness and peace my friend told me You promised. In turn, I will offer my life and service to You.”

He looked up and, as he tells the story now, “The sky was never bluer, the sun was never brighter through the open hole of a window, and I had joy rise up inside of my heart like I have never felt before.”

This distinguished professor threw all of his reservations away and shouted out, “I have bright future in Jesus Christ!” There in the prison cell he said it again, this time louder: “I have bright future in Jesus Christ!” The guards heard him this time and cruelly told him to be quiet. But his joy could not be contained. He kept shouting it over and over until they came into the cell and beat him.

A person in a prison freed by believing the Gospel of Jesus is freer than any person outside of prison without the Gospel.

Mr. Bai was eventually released and started several orphanages in the interior of China, caring for the poor and leading many to Christ. He had a bright future in

Jesus Christ. To this day his joy is infectious when you meet him. And he will tell you the joy he had in prison is the same he has to this day.

Every person feels at times they are in a prison of their own making—trapped by thoughts, habits, actions, and a nagging past that will not let them go.

The Gospel teaches us that the worst of all prisons is the one we make for ourselves. The cells of this prison are barred with our insecurities, with the deep awareness that something is not right inside us, that something is deeply broken. We carry this with us like chains around our necks. It is the human condition.

This will only change if something drastic happens.

The Gospel is the most drastic of measures. It’s a bloody cross. It’s the death of God Himself for our sake. It’s the utter smashing defeat of death itself in a glorious resurrection to show God’s love and power throughout all eternity.

What would happen if you woke up and reminded yourself of the Gospel every day? It would be Easter every morning. How different would your life be? How much more joyful, grateful, secure, and loved would you be?

Scripture reminds us that we must pay close attention to what we have heard, especially when it comes to

the Gospel (Hebrews 2:1). The most important sermon you will ever preach is the one you preach to your own heart, daily reminding your heart, “I have a bright future in Jesus Christ.”

Jesus, every day is a battle to realize the brightness of Your Gospel in the midst of the darkness of this world. Lift my eyes to see just how bright Your light is today.

—Ryan Skoog



WEEK 1
THE GOSPEL