



# Western



# Letter from the President



# Table of Contents



## Why a Magazine?

Welcome to the premiere issue of Western Seminary's new magazine. Why a semi-annual magazine, instead of occasional newsletters like The Communicator? After some research and reflection, we believe that this magazine format is an even more effective vehicle for telling the Western story to friends of the Seminary. Grouping each issue's content around a common theme enables the core values of Western to be communicated in more depth and from multiple perspectives. And thanks to the rearrangement of some budget funds and the kindness of our vendors, we can do this communication upgrade without incurring any additional costs.

I cannot think of a more timely or appropriate theme for this initial issue than "gospel-centered transformation." We have been using that phrase quite a bit over the past months, and here we have an opportunity to share in greater detail what the term means, why we have adopted it as an institutional focus, and how it is being lived out in various dimensions of our Seminary's life. We will also share a handful of resources that can help you further appreciate the amazing truths of the biblical gospel and appropriate more fully their unique, Spirit-enabled power to overcome both the penalty and power of sin. Finally, as part of our stewardship education initiative, we offer some advice about God-honoring estate planning. One such gift has, over a five-year period, greatly helped hundreds of students afford seminary. That's just one example of how such forward thinking can bless many, even after we have entered heaven.

Our next issue will focus on Western's global impact. Our faculty and alumni have an amazing ministry reach each year, so we look forward to highlighting some of these wonderful stories of how the gospel is impacting various people groups around the world. Those who invest in Western make this ministry possible, so we want to make more widely-known the dividends—both in this life and in the life to come—produced through strategic stewardship. It's hard to imagine a more satisfying and secure "return on investment."

Our desire is that this magazine would be an effective means of informing you about Western's ministry and of ministering to you as well. We would love to hear your feedback about the magazine format in general or this issue in particular. You can send any comments, questions, or suggestions to me at [president@westernseminary.edu](mailto:president@westernseminary.edu).

*Randal Roberts*

Randal Roberts  
President

### President

Randal Roberts

### Vice President of Advancement

Greg Moon

### Contributing Staff

Jason Barnes

Kristin Gibb

Hoy Kim

Jeff Mammen

Julia Seal

### Graphic Design

Mark Slotemaker

### Contributing Photographers

Jelani Memory

Melissa Tomeoni

Western Magazine is published semi-annually by Western Seminary and is sent to alumni, supporters, and friends of the Seminary. Western Seminary strives to serve as a catalyst and resource for spiritual transformation by providing, with and for the church, advanced training for strategic ministry roles.

Western Seminary  
5511 SE Hawthorne Blvd  
Portland, OR 97215  
503.517.1800

[advance@westernseminary.edu](mailto:advance@westernseminary.edu)  
[www.westernseminary.edu](http://www.westernseminary.edu)

## 4 Rediscovering the Gospel?

Gospel-centered transformation is finding new life and relevance as the next generation of leaders considers the only means for lasting change.

## 9 Portland Campus Being (Not Doing) Church

Master of Arts (Biblical & Theological Studies) student Jeff Vanderstelt discusses leadership at Soma Communities, an innovative network of churches in Tacoma, Washington.

## 10 Sacramento Campus A Pastoral Paradigm Shift for the Better

Master of Divinity student Lance Hahn shares how his seminary experience served as a catalyst for personal transformation in his pastoral ministry.

## 11 San Jose Campus Growing in Grace

San Jose alum Yemi Getachew explains how a Master of Arts in Marital and Family Therapy degree was the key to helping her shed a rigid spiritual perspective in favor of gospel-centered grace.

## Unlocking the Power of the Gospel Story

Seminary professor and long-time pastor Dean Smith demonstrates how a change in perspective can be the key to personal transformation and discovering God's call for our lives.

## 12 We Can Never Outgrow the Gospel

What do our attitudes and actions demonstrate about our relationship to the gospel? Theology professor Todd Miles considers what our behavior may reveal about our belief.

## 15 The Cross at Work: Reflections from My First Year

Greg Moon recounts lessons learned during his first year on staff as the Vice President of Advancement.

## A Biblical Basis for Estate Planning

Stewardship expert Gene Christian explores the biblical values behind our long-term investments for the kingdom.



# REDISCOVERING THE GOSPEL?

**Several years ago, a group of twenty-something Santa Cruz surfers started coming to church.**

**They were led by a rock and roll pastor with a penchant for tattoos and a reputation for incorporating both ancient and contemporary expressions of Christian faith. Attendance soared and other churches took notice.**

**Pretty soon, young men and women were traveling from far and wide to experience this new not-your-parents' brand of worship service.**

Pastors traveled the California coast to discover the secret. They wondered, How was this leader reaching those that no one else had been able to reach?

At the time, Brian LePort was one of many who made the pilgrimage. He and his ministry team had been charged with starting a young adult ministry in their San Francisco church and they were praying for a movement of God. Like many others, LePort bought into the idea that other churches were experiencing exponential growth and seeing conversions to faith because they'd stumbled upon the right formula. He was convinced that, if he could bring that formula back to San Francisco, his church would automatically experience a powerful movement of God.



LePort and his ministry partners piled in a pickup and drove south to investigate. They took it all in – the flickering candles, the stylish red and black decor. They noticed that people sat at round tables, rather than on pews. After attending a worship service and interviewing the pastor, they sped home, eager to put their research to work.

LePort laughed as he recalled how his ministry team carefully rehearsed the details of all they had seen and revamped their worship service to match. “We dimmed the lights,” he remembered. “We had artists paint during worship.” They spared no effort in replicating others’ techniques. Then they waited to see what would happen.

And waited.

And waited.

“After a while, it felt really discouraging because what was working in other places wasn’t working in San Francisco,” LePort recalled. “I felt like I was giving more of my energy to being a salesman of church

## I think for a long, long time we have been sold a bill of goods that we can pursue the idols of our hearts by way of ministry.

and showing people why Christianity was still relevant and cool.” Instead of reaching young men and women with the gospel, LePort found that incorporating an artistic Santa Cruz vibe in downtown San Francisco left most attendees feeling awkward and out of place.

God ultimately redeemed this failed ministry experiment, using it as a catalyst for LePort to discover a whole new philosophy of Christian life and ministry. Without even realizing it, he was like many other young leaders who had grown up in a climate where booming church attendance equaled success and where ministry leaders routinely compared notes, asking successful pastors, “What’s working?” Books, conferences, and vision trips all played into the subtle shift away from praying for a movement of God to instead relying on the latest trendy methods. Pastors who formerly asked, “How has God shaped me to lead my congregation?” now wondered, “How can I be more like the most successful ministry leader of my day?” Over time, this futile quest for the magic bullet was leaving Christian leaders feeling powerless, exhausted, and defeated.

LePort later graduated from Western with a Master of Arts (Biblical & Theological Studies) degree. Today, he’s studying in the Master of

Theology program and one of many voices at Western advocating the power of a different approach, captured in the phrase “gospel-centered transformation.” Hardly a new concept, it’s been at the heart of Western’s beliefs and practice, in a sense, since the Seminary was founded in 1927. Today, it’s finding new life and relevance for upcoming generations of men and women who are preparing for a lifetime of strategic ministry.

Simply stated, gospel-centered transformation reflects the conviction that the gospel alone (over trends and methods) is the only means for fruitful ministry and lasting life change. It frees ministry leaders from bearing the weight of fruitful ministry, relying not on their own wisdom or personal charisma, but on the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Seminary President Randy Roberts defines this concept as an unpacking of Paul’s assertion in Romans 1:16 that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

“It’s not something that just gets us saved in the narrow sense of where we spend the life to come, but it also saves us in the much broader sense of enabling us to experience the first-fruits of eternal life and God’s resurrection power in this life as well,” he said.

After 17 years as the senior pastor at New Life Church, Scott Reavely has earned the right to speak to both the pitfalls of man-centered ministry and the power of the gospel. “I think for a long, long time we have been sold a bill of goods that we can pursue the idols of our hearts by way of ministry,” he said. “If we preach to a large enough crowd, if we have a certain following, then we think God loves us and we’re somehow in His favor.” He believes that gospel-centered transformation has the ability to help the church move from that false thinking to the truth – God’s love and favor are a result of Christ’s work, not ours.

A graduate of Western’s Master of Divinity, Master of Theology and Doctor of Ministry degree programs, Reavely is also chairman of the Seminary board of trustees. He is actively involved in training the next generation of pastors through a mentorship program at the Seminary, helping young men return to the gospel

for their personal growth and power for ministry. As these student interns have grown in their understanding and experience of the gospel, it’s had a long-lasting impact on their relationship with Christ and pastoral perspective. A number of them have joined the staff at New Life Church upon graduation.



The implications of gospel-centered transformation in the lives of Western’s students are as diverse as the men and women themselves. Master of Divinity student Solomon Rexius smiled as he considered how his studies have shaped his view of the Christian message as well as his passion for music.

A singer and songwriter, Rexius and his brother Caleb regularly perform together and have a popular following. Rexius safeguards against the possible pitfalls of growing fame by viewing his music as ministry. “We pray before every concert that in success and in failure, God would get the glory. We’re here to make disciples, not fans.” Practically speaking, that means that they post Scripture passages to their Facebook page. They jot Bible verses on their CDs. They write songs with a gospel focus. “You can’t compartmentalize the gospel,” Rexius said. “It’s something that takes over your whole life.”

And sometimes, allowing the gospel to take over one’s whole life can make things messy. Elissa Starks is preparing to graduate next month with a Master of Arts in Counseling degree. She candidly admitted that it would have been easier for her to study counseling at a secular institution and not have to wrestle with the balance of integrating faith into her practice. However, like Rexius, she felt that the gospel left her no choice. If she truly believed the Christian message, she should endeavor to live it out in all aspects of her life and work, even if that created tension. That said, she’s deeply appreciative of the way that this tension has shaped both her counseling philosophy and her faith.

Starks has been counseling drug addicts during a practicum at the Salvation Army and wrestling with how to best incarnate Christ to her clients. She’s been focusing on how to emulate Jesus’ role as healer through her work as a counselor. And as a result of gospel-centered transformation, she can trust that God will use her in the lives of her clients through the power of the Holy Spirit, rather than as the result of her own efforts.

Remember Brian LePort? He too has come a long way from his first days in ministry. While his study of the gospel has clearly shaped his views on leadership, it has also redefined his academic goals and future career. “My learning is not for head knowledge or to impress someone else,” he said. LePort has long

## WHAT IS GOSPEL CENTERED TRANSFORMATION?

DR. ART AZURDIA

Is this the latest in a long line of evangelical catchphrases that, though impressive as an advertising slogan, is ultimately void of substance?

Not at all.

Gospel-centered transformation is nothing novel or innovative. It is the recovery and re-articulation of something ancient and orthodox. Its track record throughout the last two thousand years has established it as a fresh and relevant reality.

Simply stated, the gospel of Jesus Christ concerns the comprehensive transformation of human beings, a transformation powerfully initiated when the gospel itself—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—is embraced. This, however, is but the inception of a transformation that persists relentlessly until God’s gracious aim is finally achieved: human persons who perfectly image Jesus Christ Himself.

On that great day, God alone will rightly receive the credit and glory, for only He could produce that miraculous change. And we will see then what the Scriptures teach us presently—that the gospel is the instrument God employs to effect the ultimate transformation of those who believe.

For this reason, Western Seminary finds itself—more than ever before—intentionally and enthusiastically committed to the gospel.

---

*Dr. Art Azurdia is the Associate Professor of Pastoral and Church Ministry, and Director of Pastoral Training, Portland. He is also the author of [Spirit Empowered Preaching](#) and [Connected Christianity](#).*



aspired to earn a doctoral degree and teach others. Today, he does so with a desire to serve the church, train pastors for real-life ministry, and address the questions that Christians are currently asking.

He's come to see how the gospel gives meaning to all vocations. In a culture that values celebrity, he recognized that it's easy for people to get discouraged when they feel like their work isn't going to get a lot of attention – whether they're working in a nine-to-five job or as a stay-at-home mom. "You're not just typing in data; not just watching children," he countered. "You're on mission to spread the gospel. God's purpose for you is being fulfilled as the Holy Spirit transforms you into the person He wants you to be."



For each of these men and women, their ability to better understand and internalize the gospel message has resulted both in personal transformation and a dramatic shift in their approach to life and ministry. And these stories are just a few examples, representative of a much greater movement among Western's students, staff, and faculty. President Roberts explained that Academic Dean Marc Cortez has led the faculty in revising course curricula to help students more fully

## God's purpose for you is being fulfilled as the Holy Spirit transforms you into the person He wants you to be.

experience gospel-centered transformation. For example, Associate Professor of Theology Jeff Louie is experimenting with a way of organizing the systematic theology sequence around the theme of gospel centrality. Associate Professor of Pastoral and Church Ministry Art Azurdia is training the next generation of preachers to prepare sermons which reflect the biblical emphasis on the person and work of Jesus. In his role as Professor of Spiritual Life Development, Roberts has added a new book to an introductory spiritual formation course that connects personal growth with the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

*Continued on page 14*

## ANYTHING LESS THAN THE GOSPEL WON'T WORK...

DR. RANDAL ROBERTS

Biblical change involves both example and empowerment. The example is Jesus; the empowerment comes from the Holy Spirit, whom we receive when we embrace the gospel and its message of justification by faith alone. Thus, a gospel-centered approach to spiritual transformation will be built on the foundation of grace that keeps us humbly dependent upon God and will be motivated primarily by gratitude for God's amazing and sacrificial love. Any approach that minimizes any of these elements fails the test of gospel-centeredness.

Many forms of therapy and self-help often involve psychology replacing theology as the content that informs, inspires, and guides change. But that usually substitutes merely human wisdom for the wisdom of God, and that's never a wise trade. Plus, the root cause of human dysfunction—estrangement from God—is not treated, only its symptoms. That's why many addicts sadly end up merely exchanging one addiction for another.

Legalism tries to re-order one's behavior so as to earn God's favor by obeying His commands. This "I obey; therefore, I am accepted" approach, however, feeds

a sense of self-righteousness and leads to insecurity (especially for those rightly aware of God's standards and their failings). In contrast, the gospel's message of "I am accepted; therefore, I obey" instead bases our confidence and security solely in Christ's perfect righteousness that we receive by faith.

Similarly, moralism emphasizes following an ethical code but often neglects the motivation and empowerment for virtue that comes with the gospel. In addition, "doing it just because it's the right thing to do" overlooks the fact that God's commandments are sourced in His loving wisdom. Once we understand that, such commands become more reasonable and easier to obey.

Lest I be misunderstood, the insights of psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, and other disciplines may be used to supplement the change process triggered and sustained by the gospel. But we must never allow them to supplant or contradict that gospel.

*Dr. Randal Roberts is President of Western Seminary and Professor of Spiritual Life Development.*

## PORTLAND CAMPUS NEWS

# Being (Not Doing) Church

Master of Arts (Biblical & Theological Studies) student Jeff Vanderstelt on leading Soma Communities in Tacoma, Washington

**SEVEN YEARS AGO** we moved back to the Seattle/Tacoma area to plant churches because we saw the need for gospel-centered, missionally-focused equipping and sending churches.

**EARLY ON IN OUR JOURNEY** we realized people needed more than vision or tasks. They needed to be motivated by the gospel and their new identity in Christ.

**PEOPLE ARE ALREADY BUSY**, so we didn't add a bunch of programs. Instead, we called them to engage in living ordinary lives with gospel intentionality – take what you already do and do it with gospel motives and actions. We trained people how to contextualize the gospel in daily rhythms such as eating, listening, recreating.

**SINCE MOST** in the Northwest are not in a church gathering on Sundays, Soma decided not to gather the first Sunday of the month so people could host brunches and invite their neighbors over. Many have come to Christ as a result.

**WE EQUIPPED PEOPLE** to lead Missional Communities, which consist of a small collection of believers who radically re-orient their lives together around the mission of making disciples. In 6 years Soma multiplied from one Missional Community to more than 45 and as 6 different churches under 15 different elder/pastors.

**PEOPLE RESPONDED DIFFERENTLY** to this way of being the church. Some people were perplexed because they didn't know we could be the church this way. Others were offended by or in opposition to this way of being the church. However, many were greatly encouraged because now everyday life counted as worship and mission.

**THE WORLD'S SIGNIFICANCE COMES FROM WHAT THEY DO**, but our significance comes from what Jesus did. So we call people to live out the mission in light of identity. We lead them to ask, "What would we do if we were God's family... missionaries... servants... disciples... learners?" There are huge implications if we believe these identities.



# A Pastoral Paradigm Shift for the Better

When Lance Hahn came to Western in 1999, he had no idea that God was training him to become a leader in discipleship and ministry throughout Northern California.

Hahn was just 25 years old when he started his studies. He had planned to pursue a career in music, but God redirected him to ministry. Others told him that he'd need to pursue a seminary degree in order to serve as a senior pastor, a role he had never considered.

As he prepares to graduate this spring with a Master of Divinity degree, Hahn is now the senior pastor of Bridgeway Christian Church in Rocklin, California. He paused to reflect on all that he has learned at Western, as well as the power of the gospel for life and ministry.

"Almost every assignment was geared toward either greater ministry power in the Lord or personal transformation," Hahn said. "Western set a foundation by which the Lord could operate in my life."

During the past thirteen years, Bridgeway has grown from 40 members to more than 2,500. It started as a plant from three churches that shared a heart for the region and has grown to impact local schools, serve the homeless, have a national radio presence, and send missionaries to live in five different countries.

How has the gospel shaped their approach? Hahn describes the good news as God-centered but people-absorbed, meaning that leaders must demonstrate the same radical love for people that's apparent in Christ.

"All we have are sinners in our church," Hahn recognized. "We have people that are growing up in the Lord who are in transition. But I see in the gospel room for transition. I also see expectations to grow. And so I demand that of myself and others."

Four times a year, in place of the traditional church service, attendees are sent out to minister to the homeless, to participate in work projects, and to engage with the community.

"The job of leadership here is to ask, 'What is God saying?'" Hahn stated. "It's taken us into some pretty unusual waters."

Not long ago, the leaders felt God prompting them to host a prayer and worship night. About 1,000 people showed up. It became a night of restoration, as people dedicated their lives to the Lord, experienced



relational healing, and sought reconciliation in their marriages. "We went around and anointed people with oil and prayed over them as leadership, and then let God do what He wanted to do. We do some very unusual things."

Hahn's understanding of the gospel has also caused Bridgeway's leaders to take an unusual approach to planning. They plan for a few years at a time, willing to abandon goals if they perceive God's leading in a different direction. Hahn explained, "We view Scripture saying, 'You need to prepare your heart so that, when I tap you on the shoulder, you're ready.'" He compared it to King David's days practicing with a sling, never guessing that he would fight Goliath.

Over time, the church has become a place for hurting leaders to come and heal after a season of burn out. It's been a place for Hahn and others to raise up new leaders, often sending them out to lead elsewhere. Hahn welcomes the opportunity to equip other churches for kingdom work.

As much as Hahn is clearly enjoying his present ministry, he is quick to acknowledge God's sovereignty. "I have a standing deal with God that, when He's done using me in this capacity, I'm done."

He paused and turned to consider the personal significance of his role at Bridgeway. "I've never been so proud to lead. God is doing indescribable things and I feel blessed just to be here.

"It's almost like God is using us as an experiment," Hahn mused. And as the church's senior pastor, he's a willing participant as he seeks God and continued growth in the gospel. It's a process that's bearing fruit in his church and surrounding region. "If one is transformed, many others will be impacted as well. My life is evidence of that."

# Unlocking the Power of the Gospel Story

"In my estimation, gospel-centered transformation is actually bringing the kingdom of God to earth." As a Western Seminary adjunct professor and long-time pastor of The Highway Community in Palo Alto, California, Dr. Dean Smith is passionate about seeing the kingdom come to life through men and women who have been changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In more than 25 years of pastoral experience, Smith has tapped into the gospel's power to transform by challenging people to see their story as part of a much bigger narrative. He acknowledged the tendency to view life from a narcissistic and myopic perspective – casting ourselves as the stars and calling upon God to answer our prayers for health, professional success, or a satisfying marriage. Instead, Smith championed the biblical model of seeking God's kingdom first, trusting that He will provide for life's needs.

Smith uses powerful questions to help others discover how their individual stories are designed to fit into God's kingdom narrative. "How is God healing you? How is God changing you?" he asks. "What's He doing in the lives of those around you? How does your passion intersect with the world's need?"

In his church, this change of focus led a young professional to spend two years leading farming and clean water projects in Mozambique. A talented executive left a successful career to establish an organiza-

tion in which she coaches minorities living in poverty. Another traveled to Cambodia to work with the abolitionist movement.

In the classroom, Smith helps students connect the gospel, their personal call, and their studies. For a class on evangelism and apologetics, he asks students to evaluate their church's approach to mission. For another course, titled Developing Godly Leadership, he pushes students to see the gospel as central to leading others in discovering their call. As he teaches ethics, he emphasizes the importance of the gospel as the starting point for making God-honoring decisions.

From Smith's perspective as both professor and pastor, the kingdom takes shape as men and women give their lives to serve others in response to God's love and grace.



# Growing in Grace

As an immigration lawyer, Yemi Getachew was used to people paying for her advice, which gave her a sense of authority. However, she credits her training from Western Seminary's Master of Arts in Marital and Family Therapy program for helping her become more effective in listening to her clients' stories, understanding the family picture her clients bring with them, and having more compassion for people separated by thousands of miles from their families.

Before attending Western, Getachew characterized her leadership of young adult groups as a rigid spiritual box, with no room for grace or failure.

She started seminary, never anticipating that her whole approach and attitude would change dramatically. "Being willing to examine my own life was something I had not bargained for," she said. "I did not expect to be transformed. I just went in to be equipped."

Getachew graduated in 2008, and today she sees the contrast between her former and current approach. "Now, when people talk, I encourage that," she said. "And I see their lives being transformed, openly and in community, because of their transparency. My own transformation has allowed for that."

By example, Getachew demonstrates the many career and ministry options available to those with marital and family therapy training. Her degree has not pigeonholed her into a narrow list of options. That's a good thing, because she is not the type for boxes. At least, not anymore.

Getachew's future plans include earning hours towards licensure in the areas of conflict resolution and mediation. She is also seeking to facilitate short-term trips for students to minister in a child development training center in Ethiopia.

# We Can Never Outgrow the Gospel



**Dr. Todd Miles**

Christians can never outgrow the gospel, but our churches are full of confessing believers who believe that they have done just that. Of course, few, if any, would actually admit to outgrowing the gospel. Nevertheless, the reality is that many sincere believers

in Jesus live their lives, however imperfectly, as though this were the case. They may claim that it is the gospel of Christ that saves them, but if you scratch below the surface, what they really mean by such a claim is something like this: “Now that I have gotten in by the gospel, it is up to me to make something of my Christian life.” In theological terms, the gospel works for justification, but when it comes to sanctification, the ball is squarely in the believer’s court.

The Bible presents a radically different view of our dependence upon the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are “being saved, if (they) hold fast” to the gospel of Christ’s death for sins and His subsequent resurrection. Scripture does teach that salvation is a past deliverance that has already taken place for the Christian (Rom. 8:24; Titus 3:5-8). But salvation is a present deliverance as well (2 Cor. 2:15; 1 Pet. 1:9), because of the ongoing work of Jesus, the great High Priest. Salvation is also a future event (1 Thess. 5:8; Heb. 1:14), because the believer will one day see the risen Christ and be saved (1 John 3:2). All salvation, past, present, and future, whether it be justification, sanctification, or glorification, is inextricably tied to the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return of Jesus Christ – that is, the gospel.

We are always, continually, and absolutely dependent upon the gospel for all of our interaction with God. Because we live our lives before and at the good pleasure of the governance of God, we are always, continually, and absolutely dependent upon the gospel for every aspect of our lives, period. Some may live in explicit denial of this fact, but they live as rebels, those who are dead in trespasses and sin, without hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:1-12). Some believers may live in ignorance or implicit denial of this fact, but they are only following the example of those who are dead in

trespasses and sin, without hope and without God in the world. On any analysis, such examples are hardly worth emulating.

How does this work practically? Take something as crucial and fundamental as forgiving one another. When I choose to forgive one who has wronged me, I am refusing to be angry and I am relinquishing my moral right for revenge. That is, I am refusing to hold the offense against the wrong-doer, trusting that the moral scales of the universe are not going to be thrown off-kilter by my refusal to seek balance or redress. How can the non-Christian do such a thing? He may say that he forgives. He may consciously choose not to dwell in bitterness (if that is possible). He may even be able to forget the wrong done. But unless amnesia kicks in, is there not something that gnaws at the forgiver that the wrong-doer “got away with one, and that’s not fair”?

Not so for the Christian. As believers, we are commanded by Christ to forgive as the Lord has forgiven us (Col. 3:13). But that command to forgive is grounded in the gospel, and our subsequent ability to forgive flows from the gospel. If my wife wrongs me (hypothetically), I am able to forgive her without reservation because I know that Christ dealt with her sin and mine on the cross. Accounting is complete and the fabric of the moral universe is intact. If I choose not to forgive her, I am effectively telling Christ, “Your sacrifice was sufficient to atone for my sins, but it was not sufficient to atone for her sins against me. I am going to make her pay extra.” Such an unforgiving attitude reflects a denial of the gospel, a misunderstanding of the gospel, and a life not empowered by the gospel—which may be why the Lord will not forgive us if we do not forgive one another (Matt. 6:12; 18:21-35).

Christians can never outgrow the gospel, regardless of how long they have lived or how mature they are. It is true that you cannot be saved from the wrath of God unless you have believed the gospel. But neither can you “make something of the Christian life” apart from the power and presence of God. It is the gospel that makes it so.

---

Dr. Todd Miles is the Assistant Professor of Theology and author of [\*A God of Many Understandings? The Gospel and a Theology of Religions\*](#).



**REDISCOVERING THE GOSPEL** *continued from page 8*

Roberts explained that this focus will continue to be at the heart of the Seminary, since the church in every age is tempted to allow the gospel to become marginalized. Far from being alone in this effort, Western shares this vision with other Christian groups such as The Gospel Coalition and Together for the Gospel.

And who better to lead this charge than a man who has been personally transformed by the gospel message? Roberts grew up in what he characterized as a moral family, but he didn't come to faith in Christ until he was a sophomore in college. The impact was both immediate and ongoing. He changed his field of study from pre-law to pre-seminary. Over time, he learned to relate with God on the basis of grace, rather than effort.

Roberts also highlighted the gospel's ability to provide a context for enduring life's enduring disappointments and afflictions, with

confidence that they are not eternal. He used a poignant example from his own life, as he shared, "Being married to a woman who's been chronically arthritic and more than normally afflicted physically has made that especially meaningful."

He prays for Western's students to share his experience of God's presence and power. "My prayer is that students who graduate from Western will leave with a strengthened confidence in the uniquely transforming power of the gospel (including a deepened experience of its power in their own lives) and an enhanced competency in applying the truth of the gospel to various issues of life," he said.

Chairman Reavely agrees, and added, "If the students get it – that this is the real deal and it makes a difference – I think it can transform the church of Jesus Christ."

## Resources for Gospel-Centered Transformation

### A Gospel Primer for Christians: Learning To See The Glories of God's Love



By Milton Vincent

Beginning with 31 reasons why Christians need to regularly rehearse key gospel themes, Vincent goes on to employ narrative, poetry, and personal testimony to help believers appreciate the multifaceted riches of God's grace and avoid falling into a performance mentality.

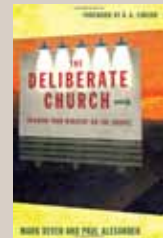
### Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting



By William Farley

Farley provides a very provocative and helpful treatment of how the biblical gospel should inform how parents relate to their children (and to each other!). This book is a wonderful example of how sound theology needs to provide a solid foundation for parenting tips and techniques.

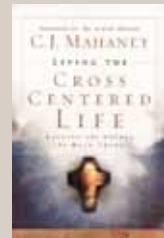
### The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel



By Mark Dever and Paul Alexander

The endorsement from C. J. Mahaney says it all: "Rare indeed are books on the church that begin with the gospel. Rarer still are books that derive methodology for building the church from the gospel. This excellent book does both." Don Carson and Kent Hughes (among others) also commend this volume with enthusiasm.

### Living the Cross Centered Life: Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing



By C. J. Mahaney

Mahaney winsomely highlights why the cross was needed and the various benefits that flow from Jesus' redemptive work. He also illustrates why Christians should maintain a cross-centered mentality and offers a series of helpful suggestions for so doing.

### The Gospel Coalition: [thegospelcoalition.org](http://thegospelcoalition.org)

This website offers an amazing wealth of resources generated by one of the leading coalitions of pastors and academics seeking to restore the gospel to its rightful place of centrality in evangelical faith and practice. Western's Associate Professor of Theology Jeff Louie is one of the members of their council and gives leadership to the Bay Area regional chapter.

## ADVANCEMENT

# The Cross at Work: Reflections from My First Year



**Greg Moon**

very little about the Seminary then and had no idea that I would soon be working as the Vice President of Advancement. Fourteen months later I am looking back on one of the most rewarding and challenging years of my professional life.

Western Seminary is a wonderful place, completely centered on the cross. It makes me think of something I recently read in William P. Farley's book, *Outrageous Mercy*: "At the cross, the love of God and the wrath of God shake hands; the mercy of God and the justice of God embrace; and the holiness of God and the sinfulness of humanity appear in stark contrast."

This past year, I have experienced what it means for an institution to position the cross at the core of its existence. I have experienced this

About a year ago, I was at a point in my life where I felt that God had something new in mind for me.

Soon after, a friend inquired if I might consider an opening in the Advancement Department at Western Seminary. I knew

in many facets: with church leaders in Sacramento, with students and alumni in San Jose, and as I sit in the classroom as a student in Portland. (I've been taking courses and plan to work toward a degree in the coming years.)

Listening to our faculty talk about their cross-centered interactions continues to encourage me. It also reminds me of something Martin Luther said: "The cross is more than a symbol connecting two Christians in a hostile environment. It is the heart and soul of our faith. The cross alone is our theology."

Even as it has been rewarding working with an institution that is true to its ideals, it has been challenging as well. We have much work to do to raise sufficient funds to help our students finance their education without incurring overwhelming debt. We must be strategic in our marketing efforts, become better connected to our local churches, and establish an alumni base that is engaged with the Seminary.

What a difference a year makes! I am grateful for the new work and relationships that God has provided these past fourteen months. I humbly look forward to what He has for us in the years ahead.

## A Biblical Basis for Estate Planning

Often we think of the material possessions we accumulate in this life as our own. Scripture paints a contrasting picture, reminding us repeatedly that we are accountable as caretakers over what God has entrusted to us.

1 Chronicles 29 teaches us that every skill we have comes from God. If you were born with superior intelligence, humor, creativity, or a strong work ethic, remember that all of those traits were given to you by the hand of God. Whether you have a large estate or a relatively small one, it is because of God that you have an estate at all.

With this in mind, how can we honor God in estate planning? How can we be sure that surviving family members' lives will be enriched, rather than ruined, by what we leave behind for them?

Developing a God-honoring estate plan requires us to incorporate our Christian values in the process. We must think deeply about how

much of an inheritance is enough for our loved ones and the way in which they should receive it. We must also consider the legacy we will leave behind. It's not just a matter of giving your money in equal shares to your children and grandchildren; rather it's about creating a permanent, values-based legacy in which your family members many generations from now can still participate.

The heart of estate planning for every believer must be about stewardship. If you allow yourself to wear the biblical mantle of caretaker, rather than owner, it will change how you think as you seek diligently to create a God-honoring estate plan.

*Gene Christian is a 24-year veteran in the field of estate planning and the founding principal of Charitable Estate Planning Northwest. To learn more, please contact Greg Moon at [gmoon@westernseminary.edu](mailto:gmoon@westernseminary.edu) or 503.517.1880.*





## WESTERN SEMINARY

5511 SE Hawthorne Blvd  
Portland, OR 97215

[www.westernseminary.edu](http://www.westernseminary.edu)



# Upcoming Events

The faculty and staff of Western Seminary appreciate your partnership and prayers for these upcoming events. If you would like to join us for any of these activities, please contact Julia Seal at 503.517.1816.

### **April 24** Portland Campus Commencement

This year we commission 82 graduates (including 7 doctoral students) at Village Church in Beaverton, Oregon.

### **May 5** San Jose Campus Preview Night

Interested in seminary? Or know someone who is? Come discover how Western Seminary trains men and women to serve effectively in a variety of ministry contexts.

### **May 26** San Jose Alumni Gathering

Western alumni and their families are invited for dinner at Canyon Creek Church in San Ramon, California.

### **June 2** San Jose Discover Coaching Seminar

Learn more about coaching, watch live demonstrations and hear testimonies from coaches in the ministry and business world.

### **June 3** Sacramento Campus Preview Day

Want to learn more about seminary? Meet faculty, alumni, current students and staff who will help you explore whether Western is right for you.

### **June 7** Western Seminary Golf Classic

In its sixth year, the Western Seminary Golf Classic raises funds to offset tuition costs for students. Join us for a great day on the links at Camas Meadows Golf Club in Southwest Washington.

### **June 9** San Jose Alumni Gathering

Western alumni and their families are invited for dinner at Twin Lakes Church in Aptos, California.

### **June 27** San Jose Campus Commencement

37 graduates will walk across the stage at Calvary Church in Los Gatos equipped for strategic ministry roles. Attend and pray with us as we commission this new generation of leaders.

### **August 14** Sacramento Campus Commencement

Celebrate with us as we graduate 25 students at Arcade Church in Sacramento, California.