

We Need God to Open Our Eyes to the Gospel

by Matt Brown

Matt Brown emphasizes the importance of being captivated by the Gospel to live a life driven by its transformative power and purpose.

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Scripture: Ephesians 3:14

Topics: "Gospel", "Gospel-Centered Living", "Purpose and Motivation"

Description

Matt Brown emphasizes the necessity of being driven by the Gospel, urging listeners to reflect on their motivations in life. He highlights how many people pursue goals for recognition or security, yet true fulfillment comes from understanding and being captivated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Brown draws from Ephesians 3, where Paul prays for believers to grasp the depth of Christ's love, encouraging a life that is not only purpose-driven but Gospel-driven. He illustrates this with the story of Henrietta Mears, whose impact on young people led to significant ministries, demonstrating how a life centered on the Gospel can change the world. Ultimately, he calls for a transformation in daily habits to align with a Gospel-driven life.

Transcript

Hey, so thrilled to be with you guys. I've been following what's been happening with YA and I'm just excited about this group and some of the gatherings have already been happening. And so I've kind of been following them along online myself.

And so I just want to talk to you tonight for a few minutes, really to ask you a simple question and then speak to it for some time. What drives you? What, what, what drives you in your life? For the hours that you, maybe, maybe you're studying in school, for the time that you spend there, maybe you're already working and in a career, in a job. What is that driving motivation? What are those motivations in your life? And a lot of times we really don't think about what is the reason we're doing what we're doing.

We just head down a path, we see other people around us do it, but oftentimes there's a motivation that's deeper than a lot of times we don't pick up on. For instance, there's a craving, almost a crushing desire in people that we want so badly to make our life count. We want to be potentially seen or noticed.

That's the explosion of selfies across the internet. But we want to make our life count for something. We want to matter to people.

We want to stand out from the crowd or for some of us, maybe it's this motivation for security. I just, I want to set myself up. I want to set my family up.

And so there's these motivations. A lot of times we don't think about them. We're just going through our job.

We're going through our school. But I want you to think about it tonight. What drives you? What is driving you to work 60-hour weeks? What is driving you to look for that special someone? What are those motivations that are leading you to where you're going? Just shortly after Y2K, there was a pastor in Southern California who was working on a book that over the next several years would come to be known as Purpose Driven Life.

Some of you may have heard of it or read it. Purpose Driven Life has now sold since 2002 32 million copies, and it's the second most sold book, or excuse me, the second most translated, not sold, because that's probably Harry Potter or something besides, but it's the second most translated Bible in other nations of the world outside of the Bible. And by the way, in case you don't know, the Bible is still the number one best-selling book in the world.

Every single week, actually the New York Times, the other national bestsellers, they don't even include it anymore, because every single week the Bible would be number one. Because the Bible is still just as relevant and powerful as it was 2,000 years ago. There's people in every single generation that say the Bible is going to be irrelevant in my lifetime.

Ninety years later, those people are forgotten, and they're gone, but the Bible continues guiding billions of people. There's something more in this Bible, and I'm going to share a passage tonight, and I want to talk about it, about this idea of what drives you, this root motivation. So this Purpose Driven Life, though, it's affected countless people, and it touched a chord of this idea of the things that motivate you.

It touched a chord on this idea of what your life is all about, and how to make your life count. There's churches across the nation, and churches around the world, that went through serieses, and they talked about the Purpose Driven Life, and had Purpose Driven Life groups. In fact, our church over in the North Metro went through it years ago, and there's a lot of great things that came out of people going through that book, but one of them, just for an example, was my brother-in-law had come to our church around that time, and was kind of disengaged with church before, has come to church, and goes to one of the small groups, and he had known my sister-in-law, in high school and stuff, but had had a girlfriend at that time, and at this time he was single, and he called her up, and he said, hey, what's your purpose? That was his pickup line, and two babies later, and years of marriage, they're doing great, and so I want to talk to you, though, tonight about a spin-off kind of of that concept, or that idea.

I want to talk to you tonight about a Gospel Driven Life, and I want to share a passage with you, and consider what that might look like, or mean, but I want to talk to you for a few minutes about a Gospel Driven Life, and you never know what can come out of a message like this, or who, what other significant other might come out of a message like this. I'm kidding. So, a Gospel Driven Life, what does this mean? And for me, what I think that a Gospel Driven Life would look like was, is that somebody whose life is saturated in who Jesus is, and what Jesus has done.

It's someone who finds a higher purpose in their life, in the things that they do, that's linked to the most magnificent event in human history, and the mission that flows out of that world alternate event. A Gospel

Driven Life is somebody who really starts, and is sustained by a person who becomes captivated by the Gospel, captivated by what Jesus has done. And so, the passage I want to read to you tonight is Ephesians chapter 3, and starting in verse 14.

I'm going to read it in a moment. If you have a Bible, or a Bible app, you can turn with me. But Ephesians chapter 3, 14.

And really, the book of Ephesians is known as one of several imprisonment letters. So, the author of this, Paul, wrote this while he was under house arrest, likely, in Rome. And he had multiple imprisonments throughout his time preaching about Jesus.

But he writes this letter in prison, and that shouldn't be lost on us, because what we're going to read, and when you think about some of these books of the Bible, when you read, Paul's talking about, really, Ephesians begins in chapter 1 and 2, and he's talking about all these incredible things that we have in Jesus. All these amazing things that the Gospel has done. We're going to read some of those.

But he's just, he's like this guy who's just blown away by this idea of Jesus, and what he's done. And he's writing from prison. He's writing with his freedom taken away, and he's sitting here as a guy who's captivated and blown away by the Gospel.

Right? Doesn't that seem weird? So, basically, what we can see from Paul, even just thinking about that, it shouldn't be lost on us that he's there writing this in prison. What we can realize from that is that Paul wasn't speaking about, necessarily, his health or his wealth. He wasn't speaking about his, necessarily, even his opportunities.

But there was something deeper and greater that he saw in the Gospel, and it's really this. There's a, there's a pastor and author who said that the good news of the Gospel is that, despite whatever circumstances you have in life, you get Jesus. The good news of the Gospel is that there's something so great in that, that really can't even be fully put into words.

And being captivated by that creates this Gospel-driven life. So, Paul's sitting here, and he's literally spending Ephesians 1 and 2, and he's just like blown--this guy who's just blown away. Just absolutely floored by the Gospel.

And in chapter 2 in Ephesians, he's, I'm setting up this passage. He begins to talk about the amazing thing about how, what Jesus does is he brings people from completely different backgrounds together. And Paul specifically speaks about how suddenly the Jews and the Gentiles are one people under Christ.

And then Paul jumps into Ephesians 3, and, and he's probably dictating this to somebody who's writing this down, and he's sharing his excitement, and jumping into Ephesians 3, in chapter, chapter 3 and verse 14, is what I want to read to you tonight, that I think is, like, just a, just a potent passage on this idea of what motivates you, of what drives you, and of living a life that really counts for eternity. And so, Paul, actually, the passage I'm going to read to you is a prayer. It's actually the second time in Ephesians.

He's sitting here talking about the Gospel, talking about Jesus, then he just starts praying. He just starts interceding. So this is the second time he breaks into a prayer, and Paul is literally praying, interceding.

It's like he's sitting there praying his heart out, not only for the church in Ephesus, but this church, or this letter was passed along to churches around the world, and now has come to us today. And I believe Paul

was not only praying for them, he was praying for us. This very passage, and these very words, that can intersect with where we are at in our lives today, and potentially, by the grace of God, could change us, and could change everything.

So Ephesians 3. And, in this prayer that he prays, is an audacious prayer. Theologians have called this the boldest prayer in the Bible. The boldest prayer in the Bible.

In fact, the end of this passage that I'm going to read, says a verse that you may know. It says, God can do more than we ask or imagine. Have you guys heard that before in the Bible? God can do more than we ask or even think.

God can do above and beyond what we could even think of. And what is believed is, yes, that stands alone on its own. God can do more than you ask or imagine in your life.

But also, it's believed that that's tied back to this prayer that Paul prays. And Paul is praying such a bold prayer, and he goes, listen, I know that God can answer this prayer in your life. And he's not just, again, I want to say this to you specifically.

God can answer this prayer in your life. He can answer this prayer in our life, because he can do more than we could ever imagine. So this is a bold prayer, but God can do it, right? So Ephesians 3, verse 14, and Paul begins to pray in the middle of writing Ephesians.

He says, for this reason I kneel before the Father. The New Living Translation says, I fall to my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. And I pray that out of his glorious riches that he will strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner man, in your inner being, so that Christ will dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, that you may have power together with all the Lord's holy people to grasp how wide and how deep and how long and how high is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who's able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine, according to his power at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. I believe that this prayer of Paul points us and gives us a clue to how we can live not just a life without understanding of motivations, but actually live a gospel-driven life that is built and rooted and motivated by what Jesus has done.

And really the the key thing that I want to leave with you tonight is that understanding that Paul prays that we will be captivated by the gospel. Paul prays that we will be blown away, right? He prays that our minds will be blown by the gospel. And I don't know, I don't know how you feel about it or where you're at, but basically as we jump in that very first verse, Paul says, he starts it with, for this reason.

He says, for this reason. For what reason? What is he talking about? He's going back to what he had said in Ephesians 1 and 2, and just listen to a little bit of this, okay? A little bit of this. Ephesians 1 and 2, Paul begins to talk about these things that have happened because of Jesus.

He says, God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. He says in verse 4 of chapter 1, God chose us before creation of the world to be holy before him. In 1 and 5, he said, God in the gospel adopted us into his family.

We were orphans and he adopted us. We were spiritually orphaned and he adopted us. In verse 7, he redeemed us.

He forgave our sins. In verse 8, he lavished his grace on us. In verse 9, he made his will known to us.

In 11, he gave us an inheritance. In 13, he sealed us with his Holy Spirit as a guarantee in the gospel. In chapter 2, 1 through 5, he brought us, literally, Paul says, because of Christ, you weren't just a bad person and now you're a good person because of Jesus.

You were spiritually dead and you are now made alive because of Jesus. So you've literally been brought to, in a spiritual world, from death to life because of Jesus. Your eyes are opened and now you can see.

In 2, verse 6, the gospel raised us up with Jesus. It seated us in heavenly places with Christ. In 2, 7, it showed us the immeasurable riches of his grace through coming ages in order that he could show us.

So as we go into eternity, he's going to continue to reveal to us more and more and more understanding of this immeasurable grace. In 2, 13, we were once far from God. We had, Paul uses this word, we had no hope.

We were without God and hope in the world. And we were separated from him, but now we've been brought near to him. Now we've been brought close to him.

Verse 2, 14, he himself is our peace in the gospel. 2, 18, we now have access to the Father. So we now are, the way has been made.

In 19, we're no longer strangers or aliens, but we're fellow citizens in God's household, being built together into everything that God has for us and for the church. Over and over again, leading up to this passage in this prayer, Paul uses words like this. He says, the immeasurable riches of his grace and his kindness.

The unsearchable riches in Christ, in chapter 3, 8. So over and over again, he says, listen, there's something that you will never be able to fully discover. And he says that in that prayer, too. He says, I pray you may know this love, but you'll never be able to.

So that's how he says it. He's like, I pray you'll be able to see how great Jesus is, but you'll never be able to understand it. You just won't be able.

You'll continue to try. It's unsearchable, but you continue to search. So here's the thing, really, that should wreck us tonight, as we consider Paul.

That this mighty scholar, like Paul, could get lost in the infinity of the gospel. While Christians today walk around bored in our faith. That we can read these truths about what Christ has done in Ephesians 1, 2, and 3, and on, and some Christian's eyes glaze over.

That we can hear about this, and we haven't even a scrap. We don't even have a scrap of the gospel. We don't even understand, but yet they're telling us, Paul's saying to us, that there's a treasure trove.

That there is an unsearchable amount of glory, and of beauty, that can change your life, and you'll never be able to get over it, in the gospel. It's what, it reminds me of what A.W. Tozer said. He said, oh God, I've, I've tasted of you, and it's both satisfied me, and it's made me thirsty for more.

He prayed this prayer. He was an author, and what he was saying was, that when you come to Christ, man, you are, there's a hole that's filled. You're satisfied, but yet, there's this incredible longing for more of God, and you can never feel like you get enough.

You're just hungry for more of God, and more of his truth, and more of his ways. It wrecks you. It does something inside of you, that changes you, and changes the trajectory of your life.

We all know the Christians aren't perfect. If you're a Christian, you know that you're not perfect. You understand that.

But, but Christ changes the trajectory of your life, and the gospel wrecks you. Paul prays in this prayer, in Ephesians 3, that God would empower us to see, that he would open our eyes. It's like, it's like trying to tell, you know, imagine Josiah and Micah in the Grand Canyon, looking at this beauty, and they're trying to explain to a blind person what they're seeing.

In the same way, Paul's saying, God needs to empower us, and open our spiritual eyes, so that we can begin to see what's in front of us, in Jesus, and in the gospel. Let me just, let me just sit on this for just a little bit more. We need to be captivated.

We need to be captivated by the gospel. We need to be captivated that by, that we need to be captivated by this understanding that pursuing God, and pursuing what his purpose for us in his gospel work, is greater than any dream or plan that we can come up with for our own lives. We need to be captivated by this understanding, like, listen, listen to what the gospel does.

In Christ, you could dream of the biggest Hollywood dream. You could dream of the biggest sports dream. You could dream of the biggest Wall Street dream.

You could dream even of doing great things for the needy. All of the dreams that we could ever come up with in this room, and I know there's a lot of them, every single one of those things is nothing compared to what we already have because of Christ. Something greater than our wildest dreams has already been done for us, and we already have it when we've received Jesus.

And we can spend our lives searching into what that looks like, and what that means in the scripture. This past year, I read about this woman who lived a life captivated by the gospel, probably in more of a way than almost anyone I've ever heard of. Her name was Henrietta Mears.

In the 1940s, she was a high school teacher in Minneapolis, and she was spending a few weeks of vacation down in Southern California, and happened to connect with, at some point, a church, Hollywood Presbyterian Church, down in the Southern California area. And they asked her, because of kind of her background in teaching and education, if she would take over their Christian education program, and this is again back in the 1940s, and also their young adult ministry. They had a young adult ministry that was actually pretty amazing, that was happening at the church.

It was this ministry that, even as she began to lead it, that just had an excitement. It was young people getting together, there was exciting things happening, and because of that, people get together with them, or outside the church, and like, this is cool, this is awesome. And like, people were coming to Christ just because of the excitement of what was happening in that group.

So Henrietta Mears agreed to actually, in her middle-aged life, to leave Minneapolis, to leave education, and actually begin doing this ministry, Christian education, down at Hollywood Presbyterian Church. And over the coming years, the group grew from hundreds to over 6,000 young people and young adults that were gathering, in the 1940s. And she was a profound teacher of the Bible, and a profound leader that was captivated by Christ, and passed this contagious passion on to these young people.

And you're not going to believe this, but here's just a few of the young people that came out of Henrietta Mears' group there at Hollywood Presbyterian Church. Some of them grew up at that church, some of them began coming and came to Christ because of it, and others of them were people that just came along through the years, and she mentored and poured into. But Bill Bright was one of them, who started a ministry called Campus Crusade for Christ, which has gone on to impact millions of people around the world.

That alone, right, would be crazy, if if Henrietta Mears was the mentor to Bill Bright. Another guy by the name of Dawson Trotman came out of a ministry, who started a group called the Navigators, which also has gone on to impact millions of people around the world, and disciple people in powerful ways. Another gentleman that came out of her group was Jim Rayburn, who started a group ministry called Young Life, which has gone on to minister to millions of high school students in incredible areas around the country.

Another gentleman who came out of there--that'd be enough, right? That'd be enough? Another gentleman who came out of her group was Richard Halverson, who for years and years was the US Senate chaplain, who would lead politicians and people towards Christ in the leadership levels of our country. Another gentleman who came out of her group was Ronald Reagan, who eventually became, after being an actor, the President of the United States. Another gentleman who came out of her group was, and was deeply mentored and influenced by her, was Billy Graham, who's now gone on to communicate the gospel with more people than anyone in human history, and that's just a few.

But to see how one person who's really captivated by Christ, who's really dedicated to the power of the gospel and the power of the scriptures, could, as a Sunday school teacher, teaching the scriptures how God could move in such a way, and I pray that God would continue that kind of movement and those kind of leaders that would rise up through this group and other ministries across the country in our generation and now today. I just want to talk practically for a second. One second piece, what I believe would be a follow-up to this, is not only being captivated by the gospel, but to let this revelation that, I pray, God would give us, because we need to be empowered to see it by the Holy Spirit, to understand the great love of God, to be wrecked by it, that it would empower, that as we experience that and see that in greater ways, that we rearrange how we live out our days.

On a very daily level, and so I just want to talk about that just for a moment, on a very daily level, your life is changed by your habits. Your life is really defined by a few humble habits that you do on a daily basis that forge your character and who you become and where you go as a person. And so I want you to think about tonight, what does that look like to set gospel habits? And for me, it's simple things.

I'll just share some of mine. One, I'm constantly thinking up new ways to share the gospel with more people. So how can I continually be doing that? Another one is that I'm focused mostly on just simple humble habits to walk with the Lord, to continually, even when I fail, come back to a place of prayer, come back to a place of digging into the Word of God for myself, reading spiritual growth books, and growing, growing, growing, growing more towards this Jesus.

Another one is that I need to love my family well. That's like right at the top of the list. I don't want to do anything else.

I want to love my family well. Another one is to give to missions and the needy in big ways. I might be a minister myself, but I want to give in big ways to the kingdom, my own money.

Another one is serving the local church, being plugged into smaller groups of believers that I can do life with and be intentional to do life with. So for me, these are a few of those habits. And all of those are rooted and motivated in this understanding of I want to live a gospel-driven life.

I want the gospel to shape who I become and where I go as a person. I want to link my life to the gospel, this mission of Jesus on the earth today. I want it to be intrinsically linked to what he's done for me.

I want to live captivated by that. A second piece to this is that we set these habits, but we need to be careful not to let every nook and cranny of our life fill up with good things, but not gospel things. We need to create margin and space in our lives so that we can have interruptions and we can be available to care about people and to love the people in our lives.

We need to just be careful not to fill up so full of all these other pursuits and these other motivations, that there's not gospel motivations that are being fostered in who we're becoming as a person. And then a final piece to this, and I'm going to close tonight, is to, a final piece to this, is to continue to return this idea over and over and over and over, because we forget. The way that Jesus came as a Jewish person, Jewish family, right? He came teaching with all this Jewish background, and one of their things was they would memorize like the entire Old Testament.

And part of their spiritual teaching was to keep rehashing it over and over, bring it up, bring it up, look at it, keep coming back to it over and over. And that's what it, I believe, means to live a gospel-driven life, is we're going to fail, but we keep coming back to this idea over and over and over again. What is driving my life? What is my purpose? How can I focus it around something that's so much bigger than me and towards Christ? Right? Paul's writing this, again, we're reminded, from prison.

He's writing this from prison, and he eventually would face martyrdom. He would give his life rather than deny Christ. And he, he is, his words by the Holy Spirit in the scripture now are still impacting us today.

His prayer is still going over us today to say, Lord, help us to be captivated. Help them to have power to grasp, though they'll never be able to, how wide and how deep and how long is the love of Christ, which surpasses anything we can ever understand? Because he says out of that place comes spiritual maturity and comes fullness in Christ to understand God's love over your life. So I just want to ask you, you can bow your heads tonight, but if you're here tonight and you maybe never made a decision to follow Jesus, I just want to give a brief moment of opportunity for you to do that, and I would love to pray with you.

And I hope that something that I said may have sparked in you an interest and a desire for Christ, but Jesus gave his life on the cross for you and for your sins, because there's no other way to God but through him. And we can't be good enough to earn it, but if we put our trust in him, he will forgive us. If we not only believe in him, but we receive him into our lives, if we accept him, if we follow him, he wants to change everything for us.

So if you're here tonight and you've never made a decision for Christ or you maybe have made a decision for Christ, but you feel that you've walked away and you want to return to that place of forgiveness in

Jesus, people aren't looking around, but just raise up your hand tonight if you would like to do that. And I'd love to pray with you. Yeah, I see you.

Anyone else? I see you. I see you. Anyone else? I see you, buddy.

You can put it down after I see you. Anyone else? I see you. You have a first-time commitment.

I see you. Anyone else? First time or a rededication to Christ and you haven't raised your hand. And Josiah will ask you to just check on a card later so he can connect with you.

But I want to pray with everybody now. If you just pray this with me, it's not a prayer that saves us, but it's our heart towards God of believing and receiving him. But if you would just under your breath, just pray this with me across this room, I'd love everyone to pray it.

Just say, tonight I come, confess that I'm a sinner, but I believe in Jesus and what he did on the cross for me. Today I turn from my sins. I follow you.

Be the leader, the savior of my life. In your name. Amen.

That's awesome. For the rest and really for all of us tonight, I just ask you to consider and pray with Paul this prayer for your own life, that God would empower you. And I'm praying this for myself, that he would open our eyes, that he would change our motivations.

And maybe there's something even daily that you can begin to think through and tweak and change for the direction and the trajectory of your life.

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