

Dynamics of Life at Trinity Baptist Church

The Word of God	The Gospel	Spiritual Renewal	Dependent Prayer	Loving Community	United Mission
The Bible is our life and authority.	By his death & resurrection, Jesus gives us his Spirit and makes us God's children.	God's Spirit frees us to live more and more like Jesus in every area of our lives.	We thank our Father for his love and present our needs to him.	We follow Jesus in vital connection with other believers.	We invite everyone to follow Jesus with us.

The Gospel

The word “dynamic” can mean “a force or property that stimulates change and growth in an organism.” Our current sermon series highlights six central “dynamics” at Trinity Baptist Church—the Word of God, the Gospel, Spiritual Renewal, Dependent Prayer, Loving Community, and United Mission.

When dealing with the topic of the gospel, we face at least three deadly assumptions. We may assume, first, that we already know what it is. We may assume that, second, that because we know what it is, we don't need to learn more about it. And we may assume, third, that we believe it, when in fact, we might not. These assumptions are like deadly beasts of prey. The first separates the victim from the herd, the second chases him until he collapses, and the third finally pounces on him.

To avoid falling into these traps, it's crucial to heed the Bible's teachings. A concise gospel statement is found in Romans 1:16-17. Here, the Apostle Paul emphasizes his eagerness to preach the gospel, not just to non-Christians but also to Christians in Rome. He asserts that he is unashamed of the gospel, recognizing it as the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:15-16).

The aim of this message is to explore the gospel's role as a “dynamic of life” in our church. This involves addressing three key questions: (1) What is the gospel? (2) Why should it be central? and (3) What does it mean for the gospel to hold a central place in a local church?

1. What is the gospel?

Paul has summarized the key components of the gospel in the opening greeting of his letter (1:1-6)—announcement, meaning, and response. The word itself (*euangelion*) refers to an announcement about some important event, such as the birth of an emperor. When Paul and the writers of the New Testament use this word, they refer to the **announcement** about the coming of Jesus and the events of his life, death, and resurrection (1:4). These events have **meaning**: they mean that Jesus is the Anointed Son of God, the divine King of the universe (1:4). And this, of course, calls for a **response** from all who hear: You must place yourself under his rule and protection (1:5).

2. Why must the gospel be central?

Paul was eager to proclaim this message again to the saints in Rome, not because they didn't know it but because it is endlessly rich and transformative. It is like the widow's jar of oil that never ran out. It is

like a bubbling mountain stream. It is like a kaleidoscope you can turn again and again, and still find an infinite variety of beauty.

a. The gospel must be central because of *what it does*: It is God's power to save (1:16). "Salvation" here is not limited to a one-and-done event, but to the full scope of God's plan to transform our souls, and bodies, both now and in the life to come. **b.** The gospel must be central because of *how it does this*: It reveals how righteousness comes from God (1:17). **c.** The gospel must be central because of *how we are to receive it*: by faith and obedience (1:17, 1:5).

3. What does it look like for the gospel to be central in a local church?

The answer to this question is actually the theme of every single letter in the New Testament, so we can only point out some highlights.

a. It means that the church will be a group of people who are both sinners and saints (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 3:1-4; 6:9-11). Remember that the gospel announcement is best heard by people who have come to realize their need to be right with God, and who see the solution in Jesus Christ (Luke 5:32). Spiritually speaking, churches are untidy places because they are filled with untidy people. On the other hand, churches strive for the highest standards of holiness. This tension exists precisely because of the gospel: It declares sinners who trust in Christ to be righteous, even before they are practically righteous, who then begin to live out that righteousness (Romans 3:21-28, Romans 7:6).

b. It means that the church will be constantly growing both deeper and wider (Colossians 1:3-8). The gospel has a deepening and widening effect, and both reinforce the other. As people grow in their faith in Christ Jesus (*deepening effect*), they become more powerful witnesses of the gospel. As this happens, more people believe the gospel (*widening effect*). This gains unstoppable momentum. Thus, we often say that *we are aiming for the gospel to reach people more, and for the gospel to reach more people*.

c. It means that the church moves forward by constantly repenting and believing. No one believes the gospel just once. They must choose to believe it every time they choose to trust Christ instead of something else: "the righteous shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17).

Discussion Questions

1. Explore the significance of Paul's eagerness to preach the gospel to the Christians in Rome. How does the richness and transformative nature of the gospel continue to impact believers even after their initial encounter with it?
2. Examine the idea that the gospel is not limited to a one-time event but encompasses the full scope of God's plan to transform souls and bodies. How does this perspective shape your understanding of salvation?
3. Explore the connection between faith, obedience, and receiving the gospel. In what ways do faith and obedience work together in responding to the gospel message?
4. Reflect on the tension between being both sinners and saints in the context of a local church. How does the gospel create this tension, and how does it affect the way we view ourselves and others within the church community?
5. Discuss the deepening and widening effects of the gospel mentioned in Colossians 1:3-8. How have you personally experienced the gospel deepening your faith, and in what ways have you seen it widen its impact on others?
6. Based on the insights gained from this discussion, how can you contribute to making the gospel a central and transformative dynamic in your own life and at Trinity Baptist Church?