

VOCATIONAL STEWARDSHIP
FOR THE COMMON GOOD

K I N G D O M
C A L L I N G

Amy L. Sherman

Foreword by Reggie McNeal

Afterword by Steven Garber

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Why We Aren't the *Tsaddiqim*

We get what we preach. . . . How we live reveals the gospel we responded to and the gospel we believe.

SCOT MCKNIGHT

For over forty years, South African believer Michael Cassidy has faithfully and courageously led evangelicals in a context frequently marked by confusion, violence, injustice and fear. He has thought long and hard about what it means to be a Christ-follower in this broken world. In his book on the fight against apartheid, *This Passing Summer*, Cassidy wrote, "Conversion marks the birth of the movement *out of a merely private existence into a public consciousness*. Conversion is the beginning of active solidarity with the purposes of the kingdom of God in the world."¹

This arresting view of salvation provides a rich foundation for life as the *tsaddiqim*. Unfortunately, such a definition of what it means to be a Christian is unfamiliar to many American evangelicals. This is because many churches preach an individualistic gospel limited to "having a personal relationship with Jesus." Sometimes even missional church leaders can be weak in this regard. (Even when they are not, they have newcomers to their church who arrive from congregations with an individualistic gospel.)

If we want to make progress in discipling Christ-followers who will live as the *tsaddiqim*, we need to understand the reasons why many do not live that way. The prevalence of an individualistic understanding of the gospel is the number-one reason. In many of our churches, our gospel is too

small.² While it is rightly centered on the vital atoning work of Jesus on the cross, it fails to grasp the comprehensive significance of his redemptive work. Consequently, it fails to direct Christ-followers into the righteous lifestyle of the *tsaddiqim*, who gladly join Jesus on his grand mission of restoration.

We'll examine this too-narrow gospel in this chapter, observing how it is expressed and reinforced in the popular music and books of current American evangelicalism. Then we'll move on to the second, related reason why most Christians aren't the *tsaddiqim*: our inadequate understanding of heaven and the afterlife. We'll see how failure to grasp correctly our *ultimate* hope as Christians limits our understanding of our proper mission in *this* world. Finally, we'll look at two other reasons that contribute to our failure to live as the *tsaddiqim*: social isolation and lack of accountability. Then, in the next chapter, we'll take up the question of what to do about all this.

THE TOO-NARROW GOSPEL

The most common presentation of the gospel in contemporary American evangelicalism centers on the death and resurrection of Jesus. This gospel begins with humankind's most fundamental and desperate reality: we are sinners separated from God. It then offers the very good news that God, in his mercy, is willing to forgive us. To effect that, he sent his own beloved Son to live the life we should have lived and die the death we deserve to die. Through Jesus' atoning work, we can enter into fellowship with God our Creator and Father. We put our trust in Jesus as Savior, asking God to credit Jesus' righteousness to our account. We admit that we have not lived as we should have (namely, for God's glory), and we "accept Jesus as Lord and Savior." Our profession of faith makes us part of God's family. Because of Jesus' atonement, we are freed from the punishment of sin (eternal death in hell). We receive the gift of eternal life from Jesus. Through faith in him, we can be confident that we will go to heaven when we die.

The Bridge illustration, an old evangelistic tool, portrays the gospel succinctly (see figure 3.1). It emerged in 1981 through the Navigators and has been included in the evangelism training done by such giants as Campus Crusade and the Willow Creek movement, not to mention at hun-

dreds of individual churches. It has been used countless times, and through God's providence it has brought many people to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

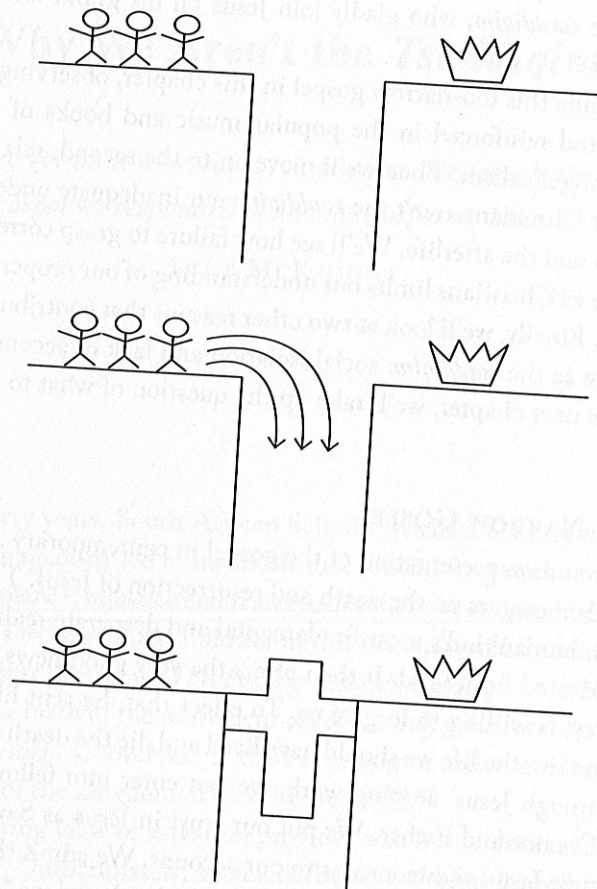


Figure 3.1. The Bridge illustration

The Bridge illustration highlights the atoning work of Jesus Christ on behalf of sinners. It shows a person on one side of a deep canyon. This represents us in our sin. God and heaven are on the opposite side of the canyon. No amount of human effort can get the sinner from one side of the canyon to the other. We can try to jump (that is, earn our way through good works), but we will only plummet to our death. The only way for a sinner to obtain God's eternal life is through the gracious, free gift of the

cross. Jesus' cross serves as a bridge that connects the two sides of the canyon. By turning away from our own efforts and relying fully on Jesus' shed blood, we are able to walk across that bridge.

The gospel as depicted in the Bridge illustration is true. It rightly presents humankind's fundamental dilemma (separation from God due to our sinfulness). It rightly gives God glory by showing both his holiness (he will not overlook sin) and his mercy (he offers his Son to pay the penalty our sin deserved). It rightly lifts up the cross of Christ, with its utterly unique power. It puts human beings in their proper place, and God in his.

But this gospel isn't complete.

The glorious truths celebrated in this too-narrow gospel do not, in themselves, capture the full, grand, amazing scope of Jesus' redemptive work. For Jesus came preaching not just this gospel of personal justification but the gospel of *the kingdom*. Jesus' work is not exclusively about our individual salvation, but about the cosmic redemption and renewal of *all* things. It is not just about our reconciliation to a holy God—though that is the beautiful center of it. It is also about our reconciliation with one another and with the creation itself. The atoning work of Jesus is bigger and better than that captured by the Bridge illustration.³

PROBLEMATIC WORSHIP MUSIC

One of the ways the too-narrow gospel permeates evangelicalism is through contemporary worship music. The incomplete gospel is not only preached from pulpits but also sung by worship bands. Much of contemporary Christian music cultivates and reinforces a me-and-Jesus mentality. And that matters, because theological shortcomings in the music we hear on Christian radio or sing on Sunday mornings affect our beliefs. As worship leader Keith Getty says, "What we sing becomes the grammar of what we believe."⁴

In 2005, Dick Staub of the Center for Faith and Culture examined the shortcomings of contemporary Christian music (CCM) in a thoughtful essay in *Christianity Today*. He argued that CCM tends to promote "fortification" rather than "real engagement" with the world. Even worse, sometimes CCM fails to communicate the realities we live in, realities that when taken seriously help us understand the need for a

profoundly powerful gospel that is able to conquer more than our personal sin. Staub wrote,

CCM assiduously avoids . . . telling the *full* truth about life, the human condition, our fallen-ness. . . . If we fail to tell the truth about our human condition, which requires nastiness and messiness and is not all that inspirational, we will be unable to explore the riches and depth of the gospel, which is about restoring *all* that unraveled in the Fall.⁵

Brian McLaren, a leader in the emerging church movement, shares Staub's concerns. In his "Open Letter to Worship Songwriters" in *Worship Leader Magazine*, McLaren complained that many lyrics are "embarrassingly personalistic":

Listen next time you're singing in worship. It's about how Jesus forgives me, embraces me, makes me feel his presence, strengthens me, forgives me, holds me close, touches me, revives me, etc., etc. Now this is all fine. But if an extraterrestrial outsider from Mars were to observe us, I think he would say either a) that these people are all mildly dysfunctional and need a lot of hug therapy . . . or b) that they don't give a rip about the rest of the world, that their religion/spirituality makes them as selfish as any non-Christian, but just in spiritual things rather than material ones.⁶

Intrigued and dismayed by such critiques, my research assistants and I decided to conduct a modest content analysis of the lyrics of today's worship songs. To identify the most popular ones, we relied on two resources. The first was *CCM Magazine's* 2006 book on "the top 100 Christian worship songs of all time."⁷ The second was data collected from Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI). From CCLI reports it is possible to identify the worship songs used most frequently in churches.

From these sources, we honed in on 127 highly popular worship songs. Then we rated the lyrics of each of these songs on a 1 to 4 scale, with 1 representing lyrics that reinforced a me-and-Jesus view of salvation and Christian living, and 4 representing a kingdom gospel perspective with a broader understanding of Christ's redemptive work and our call to follow Christ in his mission of shalom. Our average rating for songs was 1.57, skewed toward the too-narrow gospel.⁸

INADEQUATE DISCIPLESHIP

Not only is the me-and-Jesus gospel reinforced in many popular worship songs, it also permeates a good deal of the most popular Christian books. The Christian Booksellers Association and the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association produce lists of top sellers each month. Separate from these lists are lists produced by publishers, book reviewers and evangelical commentators and magazines on the "best books on Christian discipleship." My research assistants and I examined the monthly bestsellers lists for the past several years. We also collected a variety of the "best books on discipleship" lists to identify the discipleship texts mentioned most often. We found thirteen books that commonly made the cut, such as *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and *The Divine Conspiracy* by Dallas Willard.⁹

Notably, the list of top-selling Christian books and the list of best discipleship books did not overlap much. The best *discipleship* books often were marked by a kingdom gospel theology. The most *popular* Christian books typically focused on the individual Christian's relationship to God.¹⁰ To oversimplify, the books strongest on a robust theology that could undergird the life of a *tsaddiq* are generally not the books being chosen by the highest percentages of Christian readers. Just as much worship music does little to move us beyond the individualistic, narrow gospel, many "Christian living" books reinforce that me-and-Jesus mindset.

This is not a new problem. Back in 1983, sociologist James D. Hunter noted the overly individualistic character of evangelicalism. His study of eight prolific Christian presses found that a whopping 87 percent of the books dealt with subjects related to the self.¹¹ About ten years later, scholar David Wells's *No Place for Truth* lamented that because of the prevalence of the too-narrow gospel, evangelicalism was characterized by a lack of rigorous application of biblical thinking to all aspects of life:

Being evangelical has come to mean simply that one has had a certain kind of religious experience that gives color to the private aspects of daily life but in which few identifiable theological elements can be discerned or, as it turns out, are necessary. Evangelical faith is pursued as a matter of internal fascination but abandoned as a matter of external and public relevance.¹²

In 2005 Ronald Sider's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience* contin-

ued the critique. Sider's book was prompted by various Barna and Gallup survey reports suggesting that evangelicals' practice on a whole host of moral issues (for example, divorce, materialism and racism) is indistinguishable from secular people's behavior. In chapter three, Sider argued that the reason is that evangelicals have exchanged the "whole gospel" for "cheap grace":

One of the most astonishing ironies of contemporary Evangelicalism is that most evangelicals do not even define the gospel the way Jesus did! . . . Jesus did not define the gospel as the forgiveness of sins, although again and again he offered free, unmerited forgiveness. The vast majority of New Testament scholars today, whether evangelical or liberal, agree that the central aspect of Jesus' teaching was the gospel of the kingdom of God. . . . Forgiveness of sins is at the center of Jesus' proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. But it is only part of it.¹³

With a reductionist understanding of the good news, Sider wrote, too many believers think they can simply accept the gospel and then "go on living the same adulterous, materialistic, racist life" that they lived before.¹⁴

Sider's contentions are repeated in the work of another well-informed observer of evangelicalism, Dallas Willard. His 2006 book *The Great Omission* is based on the claim that, because the narrow gospel prevails in evangelicalism, we gain *converts* but not *followers* of Jesus. For the past several decades, Willard says, "The churches of the Western world have not made discipleship a condition of being a Christian."¹⁵ From his years of studying the prevailing preaching and teaching within evangelicalism, he concludes that the gospel is typically presented as all about the forgiveness of sins—period. "In contrast," Willard asserts, "I make bold to say, the gospel of the entire New Testament is that you can have a new life now in the kingdom of God if you will trust Jesus Christ." His conclusion about the tragic results of the dominance of the narrow gospel is essentially the same as Sider's: "If there is anything we should know by now, it is that a gospel of justification alone does not generate disciples."¹⁶

IMPLICATIONS OF THE TOO-NARROW GOSPEL

A context in which much Christian preaching, music and books emphasize a highly individualistic understanding of the gospel does not provide rich soil for the nurture of believers who will live as the *tsaddiqim*. This

too-narrow gospel focuses believers missionally only on the work of "soul winning." It has little to say about Jesus' holistic ministry or the comprehensive nature of his work of restoration. It focuses on the problem of personal sin only, thus intimating that sanctification is a matter only of personal morality (rather than that plus social justice). It focuses believers on getting a ticket to heaven, but doesn't say much about what their life in this world should look like. Put differently, it focuses only on what we've been saved *from*, rather than also telling us what we've been saved *for*.

AN INADEQUATE VIEW OF HEAVEN

If the too-narrow gospel is the first reason we aren't the *tsaddiqim*, the closely related second reason is our inadequate views of heaven. In *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*, theologian N. T. Wright asserts that most Christians "remain satisfied with what is at best a truncated and distorted version of the great biblical hope."¹⁷ Based on surveys of the British public, Wright says that the prevailing view of the ultimate Christian hope is "going to heaven."¹⁸ This involves a vague sense of our souls being forever with God somewhere "above." This "popular picture" of heaven, Wright laments, is "reinforced again and again in hymns, prayers, monuments, and even quite serious works of theology and history."¹⁹

Here on the other side of the Atlantic, author Randy Alcorn has noted a similar problem. He says that although the major Christian creeds affirm the resurrection of the body, many U.S. believers "spiritualize" this concept. "They don't reject it as a doctrine, but they deny its essential meaning: a permanent return to a physical existence in a physical universe. Of Americans who believe in a resurrection of the dead, two-thirds believe they will not have bodies after the resurrection."²⁰

Against the popular view of heaven as an ethereal existence on clouds, the biblical view is that God will remake both heaven and earth and join them together forever. The picture of the end is "not one of ransomed souls making their way to a disembodied heaven but rather the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth, uniting the two in a lasting embrace."²¹ The Bible teaches us that what awaits us in the afterlife is embodied life in a re-created material universe called the new earth. Space, time and matter will all be redeemed.²²

Distorted understandings of heaven and the afterlife have a corrosive effect on Christians' thinking about how to live *this* life in our routine, workaday world. If we (mistakenly) believe that at the end, the earth will be completely destroyed²³ and that just our souls will live on forever, it's a bit hard to imagine being *tsaddiqim* who are passionate for such things as environmental stewardship or cultural reformation. It's hard to stay committed to such allegedly nonspiritual works if they will all completely disappear in the end. If it's all going to be burned up, isn't our labor here on earth in vain?

To such a query the Bible answers a resounding "No!" In 1 Corinthians 15:58, the apostle Paul exhorts believers to "stand firm" and "give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Wright explains that this verse comes on the heels of Paul's celebration of the resurrection. The exhortation makes perfect sense when it connects the future resurrection with "getting on with work in the present," says Wright. "The point of the resurrection, as Paul has been arguing throughout the letter, is that *the present bodily life is not valueless just because it will die*. God will raise it to new life. What you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it."²⁴

This truth has immense significance for our vocational life. What we do in the present—"painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself—*will last into God's future*," Wright says. Such activities are all a part of "what we may call *building for God's kingdom*."²⁵ Our work is not in vain, because we are "accomplishing something that will become in due course part of God's new world."²⁶

What all this means when applied to the mission of the church is that we "will work in the present for the advance signs of that eventual state of affairs when God is 'all in all,' when his kingdom has come and his will is done 'on earth as it is in heaven.'"²⁷

IT AIN'T THAT EASY TO BE THE *TSADDIQIM*

The inquiry for this chapter is, Why aren't more of us acting as the *tsaddiqim*? What we've seen so far is that with an inadequate

theology—a truncated gospel—we don't have a vision for living in alignment with the purposes of God's kingdom. And that's a huge problem, since such alignment is at the heart of true righteousness. Not surprisingly, as evangelicals have preached a gospel that is mainly individual—and this has been reinforced through the songs we sing and the books we read—our conception of righteousness has gotten out of balance. It leans too heavily toward personal piety at the expense of social justice.

Moreover, with a theology that's all about getting a ticket to heaven for when I die, it's not surprising that many Christians don't show much interest in the question of how to live life *now*, in *this* world. When our churches teach a salvation that is only *from* (from sin and death), it's not hard to understand why so many believers don't seem to know what salvation is *for*. And if we preach a gospel that is only, or mainly, about "saving souls," we shouldn't be shocked if we end up with congregations that are not very motivated to care for bodies and material needs.

But these aren't the only reasons we're not the *tsaddiqim*. Another key reason is that the very positions of prosperity and power that make possible righteous stewardship that can advance justice and shalom also serve as sirens calling us away from kingdom sacrifice.

Lack of accountability. Wise sages have taught throughout the ages that power corrupts. Anyone with experience "in the limelight" knows the way such privilege can embolden that fallen inner voice that whispers to us of our self-importance. When the red carpet is rolled out for you, when you're invited into the exclusive gatherings, it becomes ever more difficult to fight an inflated ego. When you are the top dog, it's hard to avoid pride. Add to all this the weight of affluence—the power of riches to turn hearts away from humble dependency on God—and you can understand why many evangelicals who are the prospering would find it tough to be simultaneously the *tsaddiqim*.

The siren songs of prosperity make it imperative that preachers in middle-class and wealthier congregations urge their members to join small accountability groups. There they can ask one another the hard questions about how they are managing the faith-eroding qualities of privilege, wealth and power.²⁸ In *Faith in the Halls of Power*, Michael Lindsay found that very few of the evangelicals he interviewed were participants in such

fellowships. Perhaps this lack of accountability helps explain why he found that so few of his interviewees saw wealth “as a resource to benefit society, not the individual.”²⁹

The problem of isolation. Finally, beyond this issue of troubling temptations, Lindsay’s research identified another problem: the insulation of Christian professionals from people outside their socioeconomic class. Consider this series of Lindsay’s observations:

They tend to interact with the same kind of people, whether they are in Los Angeles, London, or Lima. They may indeed travel more frequently and engage different cultures, but most of the time they remain in a world of social, professional and economic peers. In this way these cosmopolitan evangelicals are sheltered from the world of economic inequality as much as their secular peers are.³⁰

[Evangelicals in Hollywood] differ little from others in the entertainment industry. They drive luxury cars, live in exclusive communities, and worry that their fame and talent will evaporate overnight.³¹

Evangelical executives tend to accept the material accoutrements of an affluent lifestyle without question.³²

Within their homogeneous world of prosperity and privilege, many of the evangelicals Lindsay interviewed never rubbed shoulders with the poor (or even the working class). Their friends were people just like them, from the same elite.

Potentially, the isolation that Lindsay found among the believers he surveyed might have been mitigated somewhat if those individuals were active members in local churches—but many were not. In a thoughtful op-ed in *USA Today* in 2008, Lindsay reported, “I was shocked to find that more than half—60%—had low levels of commitment to their denominations and congregations. Some were members in name only; others had actively disengaged from church life.”³³

This is problematic since personal exposure to needs is often a prerequisite for a lifestyle of deep, sacrificial generosity on behalf of others. Commitments of money, time and personal energy can develop when the prospering truly *see* the suffering of the poor and weak.³⁴ This exposure can then lead to believers truly growing as the *tsaddiqim*—people who not only *help* the poor but *know* them in real relationships.

CONCLUSION

In the brokenness of South Africa before the fall of apartheid, Michael Cassidy labored relentlessly to nurture white Christians who would live as the *tsaddiqim*. At the heart of his work was solid, biblical preaching about God’s grand story of creation, Fall, redemption and consummation. He challenged believers to eschew a private faith that excused them from the hard work of living as Christ’s disciples, imitating Jesus’ sacrificial, others-centered life. Cassidy worked tirelessly with leaders to help the church get its “act together whereby vertical and horizontal components of the gospel are brought into balance.”³⁵

Cassidy also labored to show South African believers that Christianity isn’t simply about having a ticket to heaven. It is about working for society’s renewal *now* in ways that “reflect more truly the lordship of Christ over all spheres of the life of man.”³⁶ He taught that believers were residents of two cities—the heavenly and the earthly—and that they were “not permitted to abandon either.” Their charge was to work in this material world as “an outcrop of the kingdom of God on earth.” It was to “serve notice” to a watching world that “there is more to reality than meets the eye. . . . Because we love something else more than this world, we love [this] world better than those who know no other.”³⁷ For him, right thinking about our eternal hope shapes right behavior in this life.

Finally, Cassidy knew that as critical as accurate theology is, it was also necessary to help white believers overcome their isolation. Without personal relationships with blacks who were suffering under apartheid, and without personal exposure to blacks’ real living conditions, Cassidy knew most white believers wouldn’t take the risks required for justice and shalom. Consequently, he organized exchange programs through which white evangelicals would go and live for a week in the homes of fellow Christians in the black townships. Through such programs, Cassidy saw “the penny drop” for his white friends, as they finally came to understand their social reality and the attendant call for courageous engagement on behalf of justice.³⁸

Under God’s providence, many of the groans of the oppressed in South Africa have been addressed. Happily, that nation shed the vicious policy of apartheid in the early 1990s—and Christians like Cassidy and his followers played an important role in that miracle.

Today, in cities at home and abroad, many of God's children continue to cry out for justice and shalom. Evangelical churches in America have innumerable opportunities to rejoice these communities. This will happen when our churches produce Christ-followers who live as the *tsaddiqim*.

4

How the Gospel of the Kingdom Nurtures the *Tsaddiqim*

*Jesus enticed people into a
kingdom mission from the outset.*

JAMES CHOUNG

The too-narrow gospel we studied in the previous chapter doesn't provide an adequate theological foundation for nurturing righteous Christ-followers who practice vocational stewardship. What's needed instead is a strong presentation of Jesus' gospel of the kingdom.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Jesus' gospel centered on his announcement that the long-awaited kingdom had broken into human history. Understanding what such an announcement meant to its original hearers requires reviewing what some theologians have referred to as the Grand Narrative of redemptive history.

That narrative begins with creation. In the beginning, our loving and lavish God brought into being a wonderful paradise. He set human beings in that paradise, where they enjoyed perfect shalom: peace with God, peace with self, peace with others and peace with the created order.

Tragically, the first humans disobeyed God's one commandment, not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Rather than enjoying their place as vice regents under God's gracious sovereignty, they wanted to be in charge. Their sin is known as the Fall, and it changed everything. Their relationship with God was broken, as suspicion and fear

- ⁴Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (New York: Dutton, 2010), p. 10, emphasis in original.
- ⁵Jerome F. D. Creach, *The Destiny of the Righteous in the Psalms* (Atlanta: Chalice Press, 2008), p. 18.
- ⁶Douglas J. Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 123.
- ⁷Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 100.
- ⁸*Ibid.*, p. 119.
- ⁹Creach, *Destiny of the Righteous*, pp. 34-36.
- ¹⁰Doug Sherman and William Hendricks, *Your Work Matters to God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1987), p. 97.
- ¹¹This is a central message in Mark Labberton's insightful book *The Dangerous Act of Loving Your Neighbor* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2010).
- ¹²Creach, *Destiny of the Righteous*, p. 29, 37. Notice the similarity of Creach's and Keller's definitions of the righteous.
- ¹³*Ibid.*, p. 38.
- ¹⁴Tim Keller, "Creation Care and Justice," sermon delivered at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, January 16, 2005.
- ¹⁵Justin Kitch, "The Fourth Priority," CEO Unplugged (September 20, 2006) <<http://ceounplugged.homestead.com/philanthropy>>. Note: Kitch sold Homestead.com in 2007 to Intuit, but did so after saying no to eighteen other offers. The yes to Intuit came because Kitch was confident the merger would allow Homestead's values and community-blessing practices to continue.
- ¹⁶Copeland's story is told in James E. Liebig's *Business Ethics: Profiles in Civic Virtue* (Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Publishing, 1990), pp. 139-51.
- ¹⁷"Who We Are," Act One <www.actoneprogram.com/about-us/who-we-are>.
- ¹⁸John Romanowsky, "Christians Behind the Screen: An Interview with Barbara Nicolosi," *Godspy* (November 10, 2005) <<http://oldarchive.godspy.com/reviews/Christians-Behind-the-Screen-An-Interview-with-Barbara-Nicolosi-by-John-Romanowsky.cfm.html>>.
- ¹⁹All quotes from Barry Sorrells, retired orthopedic surgeon, are from a telephone interview with the author, March 14, 2011.
- ²⁰In 2009 two students in the course objected to a reference that was made to Christianity. This led to the cancellation of the program. However, Sorrells met with the Christian Medical and Dental Association, and it decided to implement the LifeSkills Institute as part of its on-campus programs, which reach 80 percent of the medical schools in the nation.
- ²¹Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York: HarperOne, 2006), p. 7.
- ²²*Ibid.*, p. 24.
- ²³Perry Bigelow, "The Builder-Developer As Steward of God's Resources: Bringing God's Kingdom to the Marketplace and the Inner City," in *Faith Goes to Work*, ed.

- Robert Banks (Washington, D.C.: The Alban Institute, 1993), p. 61.
- ²⁴Perry Bigelow, interview with the author, June 28, 2010.
- ²⁵*Ibid.* The current recession has been such a huge hit on the housing sector that Bigelow Homes has had to make some cuts. Perry calls this current climate "the Great Depression" in housing.
- ²⁶Bigelow, "The Builder-Developer," p. 61.
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.
- ²⁸Bigelow Homes also sponsors the annual "House for Hope" project. It donates land on which to build a house and then encourages members of its professional network of trade partners to donate the necessary labor and materials for construction. Then Bigelow sells the house and donates the profits to Hope International, a Christian nonprofit, which uses it to support microenterprise loans in the developing world.
- ²⁹Perry Bigelow, "Think Differently, Think Creatively" (address to the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Housing Task Force, February 8, 2006), Bigelow Homes <www.bigelowhomes.com/Why_Bigelow/Think_Differently>.
- ³⁰*Ibid.* "The assessed value per acre at Bigelow's subdivision HomeTown Aurora (HTA) is 2.25 times higher than that of other area developments." This is a function of the relatively high density of the HTA subdivision combined with the high price per square foot of the small, premium-quality homes.
- ³¹I am indebted to Steve Hayner, president of Columbia Theological Seminary, for this insight.

Chapter 3: Why We Aren't the *Tsaddiqim*

- ¹Michael Cassidy, *This Passing Summer: A South African's Response to White Fear, Black Anger, and the Politics of Love* (Oxnard, Calif.: Gospel Light Publications, 1990), p. 252, emphasis added.
- ²This was the conclusion of some of the contributors to the Christian Vision Project, a Pew Charitable Trust-sponsored initiative of Christianity Today International, from 2007 to 2009. The project raised three fundamental questions in an attempt to assess the state of American evangelicalism. In 2008 the query was, "Is Our Gospel Too Small?"
- ³In 2008, a survey by *Leadership Journal* of nearly 700 evangelical pastors on views of gospel and mission did offer some hopeful news about slowly changing perspectives. It reported that "[a] consistent theme emerging from the survey is the belief that previous descriptions of the gospel were incomplete." Slowly, pastors are embracing a fuller gospel of the kingdom. The article quoted Birmingham, Alabama, pastor David Platt as representative: "We have emphasized that you pray a prayer and you're saved, to our detriment." Increasingly, the survey reported, justification is seen as the beginning of the journey rather than whole gospel message. Relatedly, the survey showed changes in pastors' understandings about the kingdom of God. One third said they believed the kingdom was a present as well as future reality. While this reveals that this view is still not the dominant one, evidence from the survey reveals that a shift has begun. For 58 percent said that ten years ago they believed the king-

dom was a future reality only. (See Helen Lee, "Missional Shift or Drift?" *Leadership Journal*, November 7, 2008 <www.christianitytoday.com/le/fall/7.23.html>.)

⁴Joan Huyser-Honig, "Keith Getty on Writing Hymns for the Church Universal," Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (September 1, 2006) <www.calvin.edu/worship/stories/getty.php>. In some ways, in fact, bad theology in our songs can be more damaging than bad theology in our sermons. For we *participate* in singing; our senses and bodies are engaged. People are more likely to remember the words of the worship songs they sing than the preacher's words they hear. As anyone who has ever had the experience of not being able to "get that darn song out of my head" can testify, lyrics to choruses stick with us. Yet songs containing powerful truth can also unify and sustain us in the life of righteousness. Consider the vital role of music in the American civil rights movement; truth in song animated bravery and perseverance.

⁵Dick Staub, "My Rant Against CCM," *Christianity Today*, December 20, 2005. Staub's views echo other CCM critics, including singer-songwriter and producer Charlie Peacock. Peacock was one of the first Christian music insiders to raise red flags about the industry. Back in 1998, he lamented that "it is not uncommon for songwriters to perpetuate a truncated kingdom view in their lyrics. And it's out of this small, insufficient picture of the reality of kingdom life that Christian music gets categorized, the good news of Jesus gets trivialized, and authentic faith in him gets caricatured." Charlie Peacock, *At the Crossroads: Inside the Past, Present, and Future of Contemporary Christian Music*, exp. ed. (Colorado Springs: Shaw Books, 2004), p. 72.

⁶Brian McLaren, "An Open Letter to Worship Songwriters," *Worship Leader Magazine*, March/April 2005, <www.brianmclaren.net/archives/lettertosongwriters.pdf>.

⁷Tori Taff, *100 Greatest Songs in Christian Music* (Nashville: Integrity Publishers, 2006). The list of the top one hundred songs was compiled via a survey. Fifty percent of survey respondents were CCM industry professionals and 50 percent were from a random sample of the magazine's 2,500 subscribers. This list included songs from the past few decades, thus identifying songs that have had "staying power." In 2007, *CCM Magazine* (*Contemporary Christian Music Magazine*) changed its name to *Christ Community Music Magazine*.

⁸Our ratings were admittedly subjective, and a few songs were nearly impossible to rate at all since they were about family relationships (for example, "Butterfly Kisses" by Bob Carlisle) or marriage (for example, Steven Curtis Chapman's "I Will Be Here"). We also compiled all the song lyrics into one large document and conducted a mechanical count of the number of times certain words appeared in the songs. We had two grouping of words. One set included *I, me, myself, mine, forgive* (and *forgiven, forgiveness*), and *atone* or *paid*. The other set included *justice, hungry, poor, oppressed, needy, serve, restore, heal, compassion, community* and *neighbor*. We found 1,623 uses of the words in the first set and only 29 uses of words from the second set.

⁹Others include *Christ's Call to Discipleship* by James Montgomery Boice; *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* by Dallas Willard; *Spiritual Disci-*

plines for the Christian Life by Donald S. Whitney; *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer; *How Now Shall We Live?* by Charles W. Colson; *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* by Eugene H. Peterson; *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* by Richard J. Foster; *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples: Every Christian an Effective Witness Through an Enabling Church* by Win Arn; *The Reason for God* by Timothy Keller; *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* by Greg Ogden; *Taking Discipleship Seriously: A Radical Biblical Approach* by Tom Sine; *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship* by Dallas Willard; *The Kingdom That Turned the World Upside Down* by David Bercot.

¹⁰There were some important exceptions. For example, Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* is an all-time bestseller, and he preaches a holistic gospel. Tim Keller's *The Reason for God* has been extremely popular, and he's one of the best gospel-of-the-kingdom preachers around today.

¹¹James Davison Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983), pp. 142-43. The eight publishing houses were Bethany, Gospel Light, Moody, Revell/Spire, Scripture, Tyndale, Word and Zondervan. Five years later, Hunter published a study of evangelical college students called *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (University of Chicago, 1987), noting that among this population there was an "accentuation of subjectivity and the virtual veneration of the self, exhibited in deliberate efforts to achieve self-understanding, self-improvement, and self-fulfillment" (p. 65).

¹²David Wells, *No Place for Truth, or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 130-31.

¹³Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), pp. 59-61.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁵Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teaching on Discipleship* (New York: HarperOne, 2006), p. 4.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁷N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), p. 19.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 19. Hymns like John Keble's "Sun of My Soul, Thou Saviour Dear," for example, teach us about "losing ourselves in heaven above"—an idea far better suited to Buddhism than orthodox Christianity. In other hymns, we sing of Jesus coming to take us home—*away* from earth to heaven. By contrast, a hymn like James Montgomery's "Hail to the Lord's Anointed" directs attention to Christ's eternal kingship and the flourishing that will unfold in the New Jerusalem.

²⁰Randy Alcorn, "Bodily Resurrection: Don't Settle for Less," *Eternal Perspective Ministries* (March 4, 2010) <www.epm.org/resources/2010/Mar/4/bodily-resurrection-dont-settle-less>. Alcorn is the author of the extensive book *Heaven*, a 560-page tome on the afterlife (Tyndale House, 2004).

²¹Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, p. 19.

²²Ibid., p. 211.

²³A word on 2 Peter 3:10-12 may be in order here. There the apostle talks about the world being consumed in fire. We need to recall that fire in Scripture typically means a refining fire. It's more often about purification, not annihilation. More to the point, Peter himself speaks in 2 Peter 3:13 of "a new heaven and a new earth." The word *new* there is *kainos* (new in nature or quality) not *neo* (new in time or origin). Therefore, Peter means "new" in the sense of *renewed*, not brand new.

²⁴Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, p. 193, emphasis in original.

²⁵Ibid., emphasis in original.

²⁶Ibid., p. 208.

²⁷Ibid., p. 211. Wright continues: "This will of course be radically different from the kind of work we would engage in if our sole task was to save souls for a disembodied heaven or simply to help people enjoy a fulfilling relationship with God as though that were the end of the matter. It will also be significantly different from the kind of work we might undertake if our sole task was to forget any God dimension at all and try simply to make life better within the continuation of the world as it is."

²⁸D. Michael Lindsay, remarks at the Following Christ conference, Chicago, Ill., InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, 2008.

²⁹D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 191.

³⁰Ibid., p. 221.

³¹Ibid., p. 130.

³²Ibid., p. 192.

³³D. Michael Lindsay, "A Gated community in the Evangelical World," *USA Today*, February 11, 2008. Available at <www.rev.org/article.asp?ID=2991>.

³⁴This was the finding of South African scholar Charles Villa-Vicencio and the personal experience of Beyers Naude, one of the most prominent white conservative Christians to join the resistance movement. By "real encounter," Villa-Vicencio meant that white Christians had become personally acquainted with the real-world living conditions of blacks under apartheid, and they had developed peer relationships with blacks (critical since at that time most whites dealt with blacks only in master-servant relationships). See *Resistance and Hope: South African Essays in Honor of Beyers Naude*, ed. Charles Villa-Vicencio, Beyers Naude and John W. de Gruchy (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

³⁵Cassidy, *This Passing Summer*, p. 224.

³⁶Ibid., p. 227.

³⁷Ibid., p. 473.

³⁸Ibid., p. 239.

Chapter 4: How the Gospel of the Kingdom Nurtures the *Tsaddiqim*

¹See Michael Card's song "The Promise," *The Promise* (Brentwood, Tenn.: Sparrow, 1991).

²James Choung, *True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

³Ibid., p. 198.

⁴Darrow L. Miller, *Servanthood: The Calling of Every Christian* (Phoenix: Disciple Nations Alliance, 2009), p. 95.

⁵Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch emphasize that our sentness is tied to our discipleship to Jesus: "Jesus defines us totally. . . . Our connection with the Trinity is through its Second Person. This has many implications, but for one it means that we can never get beyond the fact that we are disciples and therefore people directly connected to the messianic purposes in the world." *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), p. 113.

⁶Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Faith in Community* (New York: HarperCollins, 1954), pp. 43-44, emphasis added.

⁷Ryan Bell, "Witnessing to God's Reign," *Spectrum*, August 4, 2008 <www.spectrummagazine.org/print/845>.

⁸The apostle John wrote, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn 3:8 esv).

⁹Jesus charged the original disciples with such labor: "One day Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them power and authority to cast out all demons and to heal all diseases. Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (Lk 9:1-2 NLT).

¹⁰Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things*, p. 115, emphasis added.

¹¹N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), p. 200, emphasis added.

¹²"There's a riddle in the Talmud that goes like this, 'If God intended man to live on bread, why didn't he create a bread tree?' . . . The answer is that, in fact, God . . . prefers to offer us a grain and invite us to buy a field and plant the seed. He prefers that we till the soil while he sends the rain. He prefers that we harvest the crop while he sends sunshine. . . . Why? Because he would rather we become partners with him in creation. Of course, God could simply supply our every need and solve our every problem. But our God invites us into a creative partnership with him. He supplies the earth, the air, the water, the sun, and our strength and then asks us to work with him." Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things*, p. 159.

Chapter 5: Integrating Faith and Work

¹Doug Sherman and William Hendricks, *Your Work Matters to God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1987), p. 16. Sherman's organization did a survey of two thousand Christians. Ninety percent had *never* heard a sermon relating biblical principles to their work life.

²Nancy Lovell, "An Interview with David Miller," FaithInTheWorkplace.com <www.christianitytoday.com/workplace/articles/interviews/davidmiller.html>, emphasis added.

³Pete Hammond, R. Paul Stevens and Todd Svano, ed., *The Marketplace Annotated*