

Principles for Transformation: Connecting Personal and Public Life

The Call to Creativity and the Gospel

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We are made in the image of God. As such, a call to creativity is placed on our lives because we bear the creative characteristics of God.

We are made to use our God-given creativity to cultivate the potential of the creation around us. God created the world out of nothing, and we are called to create something out of that which exists. God is the creator, and we are *sub-creators*, the term preferred by Francis Schaefer and J.R.R. Tolkien.

Answering the call to creativity requires a shift in the way we view the gospel and our role in transforming culture. The concept of the four-chapter gospel provides the framework for this change in thinking.

A failure to grasp the four-chapter gospel has narrowed the vision of the evangelical church. Narrowing our conception of the gospel causes us to miss the purpose of humans in creation. The result is ignorance of the dignity and creativity we all possess.

Two Chapters Versus Four

Most Christians know the two-chapter gospel, even if they don't use that term. The two-chapter gospel states in "chapter one" that our problem is separation from God because of our sin. "Chapter two" describes the solution to this dilemma: Jesus came into the world to bring salvation through his work on the cross. This gospel is divided into two parts: sin and redemption.

These claims are profoundly true. They are the basic message we preach. Yet they only tell part of the story.

The four-chapter gospel bookends the fall and redemption with two crucial parts: creation and restoration.

Here is a helpful visual comparison:

Two-Chapter Gospel

Fall

Redemption

Four-Chapter Gospel

Creation

Fall

Redemption

Restoration

As we'll see, which version you believe affects your view of human purpose and creativity. First, though, let's walk through the four chapters.

Creation

Genesis teaches us that God's creation is real and good. It also teaches us about the nature of the relationship between God and humanity.

Adam and Eve had "response-ability":

- They had the ability to respond to God (personally),
- They had the ability to respond to each other (corporately),
- And they had the ability to respond to the creation (cosmically).

The Fall

After the fall, these three capacities for response were damaged and defaced. The fall affects all three dimensions – personal, corporate, and cosmic:

- Adam and Eve hid from God (personal).
- Adam blames Eve; Eve blames the serpent (corporate).
- [Genesis 3:17](#) says the ground is "cursed" because of Adam and Eve (cosmic).

Notice how all the dimensions, healthy in creation, are inverted after the fall.

Redemption

Redemption applies to every area affected by the fall:

- Christ died, rose, and reigns in power for us. According to [Romans 8:34](#), he also prays on our behalf (personal).
- [1 Corinthians 12:13](#) tells us that when we accept Christ, we are now "baptized by the one Spirit into the one body" – the church (corporate).
- Redemption extends to the whole cosmos. [Romans 8:19-21](#) says that "creation itself will be liberated from its bondage" (cosmic).

Restoration

Restoration is the final chapter in which the whole creation is finally restored. Almost every time the Bible uses the word "new" (referencing new birth, new selves, new creation, new heavens and new earth, etc.), it uses the Greek word *kainos*, meaning "renewed." God will not throw away creation, but renew it. Al Wolters [says](#), "God does not make junk, and he does not junk what he has made."

Conclusion

What are the implications of the four-chapter gospel for our call to creativity? How does embracing these additional chapters influence our outlook on the world?

If we don't embrace the four-chapter gospel, we'll see salvation as merely a bus ticket to heaven. We'll twiddle our thumbs and the world will keep on spinning as it is, until Christ returns.

A four-chapter gospel sees a different end in sight, and this makes all the difference for how we live in the present. The four-chapter gospel reminds humanity of its dignity, because it points out two things:

- Our dignity: the chapter of creation reminds us we are made in God's image and imbued with worth and value.
- Our role: creation tells us that, being made in God's image, we possess the creativity of the creator. We are co- or sub-creators whom he will use to bring about the final chapter, the restoration of all things.

Tim Keller [says](#) this of the four-chapter gospel and its relation to the call to creativity:

If...the story of salvation is creation, fall, redemption, restoration, then things look different...the purpose of redemption is not to escape the world but renew it...if we lose the emphasis on the corporate – on the kingdom – we lose the power of the gospel for cultural transformation.

We will not answer the call to creativity without a framework that provides context for creativity and cultural transformation. The four-chapter gospel is that framework, giving meaning to our creativity, our faith, and our work.

