The Gospel is the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹

The clock strikes 11:02:30. In the front, a timer appears on the left and right projector screens, immediately counting down from 2:30. Noticing the timer, the young couple in the second row looks around and settles down nervously in their seats—indicating their first time to Summit. Moreover, the couple inadvertently decides to sit in the row of old churchgoers—obvious church veterans by age and composure. As if that isn’t enough, the couple is wearing a matching shade of brown—his jacket, her blouse—that screams for attention in the row of bright dress code. And to ultimately top it all off, the couple’s thick golden blonde hair glowed among the heads of stale gray and fading brunette.

The blonde woman takes out the Bible from her brown purse while the blonde man readjusts his black rectangular spectacles on his nose before taking a look at the service pamphlet he received when he entered the sanctuary. On the front of the pamphlet, ‘GOSPEL’ is written in huge, bold, silver font against the black background, with a red sub-heading under it that reads ‘The Revolutionary Power of the Christian Life.’ After spending a good ten seconds fathoming the visual significance of how it was written, the blonde man curiously turns over the pamphlet to look over the content of today’s service, titled ‘Mission.’ “John 15:16,” he whispers to the

¹ According to Rolaant L. McKenzie, from <http://www.gospeloutreach.net/gospel.html>
woman’s ear, and promptly she shuffles through the Bible to today’s scripture. With a sense of completion, the two give a cursory look at the screen for a time-check and another to their neighbors.

“So far so good, Emily,” the blonde man says to the blonde woman.

“Not sure, Curt,” Emily responds briefly. “Let’s hope we get over this and focus on God this service.”

“Absolutely. Honey, just relax. It’ll be all right.”

Curt holds Emily’s hand and guides her through a deep breath. Emily follows and nods in affirmation. 43 seconds remaining on the timer, Emily engages in prayer while Curt returns to perusing through the pamphlet. His eyes lock on to ‘GOSPEL,’ as if there is something to be deciphered in those letters.

As soon as the timer reaches 0:00, Logan, the lead guitarist and service worship leader, comes to the front and welcomes the congregation, “Welcome, Summit Church. Would you all bow your heads in prayer as we start this service.” Hands clasped, heads bowed, eyes closed, the five hundred churchgoers respond with silence as Logan begins his prayer. “Lord, thank you for bringing us to Your home and looking over us as Your children the past week…wish that You would be here in spirit throughout the service, in Christ’s name, Amen.” Following the prayer, Logan, with both arms raised, commands, “Now, Summit, would you all rise to give worship and glory to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

As the couple gets on their feet, the drummer initiates worship with a snappy rhythm that naturally entices clapping. The congregation claps to the beat and the guitarists and keyboardist
enthusiastically join the ensemble. Song lyrics for ‘O Fount of Love’ appear on both projector screens and the whole sanctuary unites in praise, as Logan sings and leads the crowd. Feeling more comfortable than before, the young couple raises their arms up high toward God as they sing praise with genuine joy flowing from their faces. Eyes glimmering, voices raised, Curt and Emily stand out in vivacity of worship.

\[\textit{O fount of love divine that flows from my savior’s bleeding side}\]

\[\textit{Where sinners trade their filthy rags for His righteousness applied}\]

\[\textit{Mercy cleansing every stain now rushing o'er us like a flood}\]

\[\textit{There the wretch and vilest ones stand adopted through His blood}\]

After the zealous worshipping, the couple applauds as they exchange smiles with each other and take their seats again. From the ceiling, a giant projector screen rolls down between the two minor screens, indicating an imminent significance that has yet to happen. The ‘GOSPEL’ image appears briefly on the screen, magnifying its visual impression to yet a greater extent than in its former pamphlet dimensions. Inevitably—due to its sheer size—eyes simply surrender their gaze to the silver ‘GOSPEL’ shown on the screen, including the sky-blue pupils of the blonde couple.

A moment later, the screen transitions into that of Pastor J.D. standing and addressing the Summit church. The sermon is now on. “Summit Church, I would like to begin by asking you to pray in remembrance of today, September 11, this day ten years ago,” urges Pastor J.D, “for the families of those who lost their loved ones, the country, and the Muslim world.” He continues to justify that the country needs prayer to stand strong in “God’s spirit” and that the Muslim
community, despite how much they may have influenced the world, is merely a “pawn in God’s hands” that lacks the level of authority God commands. As J.D. finishes, Curt and Emily squint their eyes as if reliving the pain the country felt exactly ten years ago.

The two bow their heads and collect their hands to pray as J.D. leads prayer on his knees, as displayed on the screen. That begins another short prayer session throughout the sanctuary, except this time, much more resonant and intentional given that the members of the church are all praying for another, rather than themselves; the audible unselfishness of each person chimes together in righteous harmony. With perfect timing that does not cut off or drag the prayer, J.D. gently closes the session with “in Jesus’ name, Amen,” relaxing the congregation from the individual bursts of compassion to pick up his sermon from where he left off.

Like eager reporters with professional notepads and pens, the congregation quickly takes out writing utensils and notebooks and position themselves to take notes; Curt immediately follows with his own pen and journal.

“If you have your Bible, turn to John chapter 15, verse 16,” J.D. asks, which everyone had already done like the couple, during the two-and-a-half minute countdown period prior to worship.

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you” -John 15:16 (ESV)

“The revolutionary idea of the GOSPEL is that we don’t change by focusing on a list of what we should do differently for God, but by dwelling on the news of what God has done for us.”
Curt jots down the key words, *GOSPEL* and *Revolutionary Idea*, from the pamphlet and copies J.D.’s point in the notebook. He includes a question mark on top of *GOSPEL* and looks back up.

“Changes imposed on the outside are like bending metal: it either breaks or returns to its original shape. For instance, if church is the external pressure, which you visit every Sunday to keep you in check for doing what a Christian should do, you would return to your normal life during the weekdays or break under the constant stress of having to accomplish certain actions.”

Curt holds his pen out with both hands and attempts to bend it. He shakes his head in failure. Emily looks over to Curt and shakes her head, too—in disappointment that Curt did what he just did. Curt jots down J.D.’s metal-analogy and draws hands grabbing a pen.

“Now, relating that to spiritual fruit, you cannot bear spiritual fruit through focusing on producing the fruit itself. Let me give you another analogy: a husband and wife do not make physical fruit—bear offspring—by focusing on matching up chromosomes and fertilizing the egg, and so on…”

Curt and the men giggle as Emily and the women nod in agreement.

“Instead, it is made by a moment of loving intimacy with your partner. In the same way, you bear spiritual fruit by having that intimate relationship with God. You will desire what God wants you to do when you desire God.”

Impressed by J.D.’s clever love-analogy, Curt and Emily exchange smiles. Curt draws an apple inside a heart and arrows that point to Emily and God.
“There are three things Jesus teaches that lead us to boldness and fervency in mission: God’s Plan; God’s Promise; God’s Love.”

While Emily is still glued to J.D. on the screen, Curt jots down God’s Plan, God’s Promise, and God’s Love and bullets them.

“The first one, God’s plan is for us to bear spiritual fruit. He chose us for this purpose.”

Curt draws an arrow from the apple pointing to God’s Plan.

“We were God’s plan for accomplishing His mission of reconciling others to Himself.”

Curt adds in several stick figures and a medical cross over them. He inserts an arrow between the stick figures and God’s Plan.

“Salvation is a gift you have to receive, and you can’t receive it, you can’t put faith in it if you’ve never heard about it, and we are the only way they—non Christians—will hear about it.”

Curt pauses to plan how to illustrate J.D.’s point. But he decides to simply write out J.D.’s point instead of drawing it with symbols. Nevertheless, he doesn’t omit the arrow that points back to God’s Plan.

Unlike his row of upward angled heads, Curt’s head points down, away from the screen. Curt readjusts his glasses and examines the pamphlet.

“When He says, ‘I chose you to bring forth fruit,’ that is an implicit promise: He will bring forth fruit in you. I love that. That gives me such confidence. Boldness in mission comes from believing His promise for it.”
Head still down, Curt writes down I chose you to bring forth fruit in bold and draws an arrow pointing to God’s Promise. His eyes turn toward ‘GOSPEL’ on the pamphlet and back to J.D.

“The reason many of you have never been bold or consistent in your witness and your involvement in mission is you’ve never believed this promise. Jesus says: I chose you. I placed you in this family. This suite. This dorm room. Doesn’t that give you confidence, even when it seems like their hearts are hard and closed?”

The neighboring veterans and the blonde couple nod in acknowledgement of J.D.’s statement. Curt writes down Jesus and confidence in bold and draws an arrow pointing to God’s Promise.

“Finally, for us, Jesus said, ‘You are my friends and I laid down my life for you.’ He chose us and came after us, not when we were looking for Him. This is His Love!”

Curt draws in a heart and, inside it, a cross. He draws an arrow pointing to the stick figures and another pointing to God’s Love.

“‘Chose us’ means that we had no interest in Him at all and He came after us. Knowing this, how can we really believe what the GOSPEL tells us about why we are saved, and what the fate of others is without Christ,” J.D. whispers, “and do nothing?”

J.D.’s question is met with a salient silence of guilt, though the congregation had been quiet throughout the sermon. “The mission,” Curt sighs. He writes down Mission and circles it.
“What if I looked out in the road and saw my daughter playing in the road, she had her headphones on and she was oblivious to the fact that a huge truck was coming at her! Would I not start screaming and running to move her?”

Curt is stunned.

“Is our situation any different? How can we do nothing?”

To J.D.’s rhetorical question, Curt remains speechless though with his mouth open.

“The Gospel is that Jesus stepped in the way of God’s wrath we deserved and suffered the penalty for our sins and saved our lives.”

Curt nods, his lips shut tightly. *Jesus saved me when I was supposed to die under the wrath of God*, Curt writes and boxes it. This time, he draws the arrow pointing to GOSPEL.

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