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Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel

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Introduction: The Call for Clarity in a Confused World

In an age where the message of Christianity is often diluted, sentimentalized, or reduced to a set of moralistic tips for a better life, the need for a robust, unashamed proclamation of the gospel has never been greater. Few voices in the modern evangelical landscape have articulated this need as compellingly as Matt Chandler, the lead pastor of The Village Church in Texas and a prominent figure in the broader Christian movement. His seminal work, **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel**, serves as a rallying cry for believers to strip away the cultural accretions and secondary issues that often cloud the central message of Christ. This article explores the core themes of Chandler's book, examining why the concept of an "explicit" gospel is essential for personal faith, church health, and global mission.

Chandler's burden, as expressed throughout the book and his preaching ministry, is that many people—both inside and outside the church—have never actually heard the gospel in its full, unvarnished form. Instead, they have been presented with a version of Christianity that focuses on behavior modification, personal fulfillment, or political affiliation. Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel

Who Is Matt Chandler? The Voice Behind the Message

To fully appreciate the impact of **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel**, it is helpful to understand the man behind the message. Matt Chandler serves as the lead pastor of The Village Church, a multi-site congregation in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. He is also the president of the Acts 29 Network, a global church planting organization. Chandler's journey into ministry has been marked by personal trials, including a highly publicized battle with a brain tumor in 2009, which only deepened his reliance on the sovereign grace of God.

Chandler's preaching style is often described as passionate, direct, and theologically grounded. He has a unique ability to communicate complex doctrinal truths in a way that resonates with both seasoned theologians and new believers. His emphasis on the supremacy of Christ and the sufficiency of Scripture forms the backbone of his ministry. When he released **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel** in 2012 (co-authored with Jared Wilson), the book quickly became a significant resource for churches and individuals seeking to understand the core message of Christianity without the fluff. Chandler's voice is urgent, pastoral, and prophetic, calling the church to remember what it has often forgotten: the gospel is not just the diving board into the Christian life; it is the pool itself.

The Core Thesis: Why the Gospel Must Be Explicit

The central argument of **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel** is deceptively simple yet profoundly necessary: the gospel must be explicitly stated and understood. Chandler argues that many churches and Christians have drifted into a state of what he calls "gospel amnesia." This is not a denial of the gospel, but a functional forgetfulness where the implications of the gospel are no longer applied to daily life, preaching, or church

culture. In this state, the gospel becomes a background assumption rather than the front-and-center reality that shapes everything.

Chandler contends that when the gospel is not explicit, other things fill the void. Moralistic teaching, self-help psychology, and social activism can become the de facto message of the church. While these things are not necessarily bad in themselves, they become dangerous when they replace or overshadow the explicit proclamation of what God has done in Jesus Christ. **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel** is a corrective to this trend. It insists that the gospel must be clearly articulated, not assumed. It must be announced with clarity, not whispered with ambiguity. For Chandler, an "explicit" gospel means that the specific details of Christ's life, death, and resurrection are laid out plainly, with an emphasis on the objective work of God rather than the subjective experience of the believer.

The Four-Part Structure: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration

One of the most accessible and compelling features of **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel** is its simple, biblical framework. Chandler organizes the gospel around four major movements of the biblical narrative: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. This structure ensures that the gospel is not reduced to a transactional formula but is understood as the grand story of God's redemptive work in history.

Creation: The World as It Was Meant to Be

Chandler begins by establishing that the gospel only makes sense in light of creation. God made a good world, and He made humanity in His image for relationship and purpose. This foundational truth is essential because it provides the standard by which everything else is measured. Without a robust understanding of creation, the fall loses its tragedy, and redemption loses its meaning. **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel** emphasizes that we are not accidental byproducts of cosmic chance; we are intentional creations of a loving God. This gives human life dignity and value, but it also establishes that we are accountable to our Creator.

The Fall: The Tragedy of Rebellion

The second movement is the fall. Chandler does not shy away from the harsh reality of human sin. He presents the fall not merely as a mistake or a lapse in judgment, but as a cosmic rebellion against a holy God. The explicit gospel must include the bad news before the good news makes sense. Chandler explains that sin is not just doing bad things; it is a condition of the heart that alienates us from God, from others, from ourselves, and from creation. The consequences of the fall are devastating—spiritual death, physical death, and eternal judgment. This part of the book can be uncomfortable, but Chandler argues that it is necessary. A gospel that minimizes sin produces a shallow salvation. **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel** insists on telling the whole truth about the human condition so that the remedy can be fully appreciated.

Redemption: The Heart of the Gospel

The third and central movement is redemption. This is where the explicit details become most critical. Chandler walks readers through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, explaining how these events accomplish salvation for sinners. He emphasizes the substitutionary atonement—that Jesus died in the place of sinners, bearing the wrath of God that we deserved. He also highlights the active obedience of Christ, who lived a perfect life to fulfill the demands of the law on our behalf. The resurrection is presented as the vindication of Christ's work and the guarantee of eternal life for all who believe. For Chandler, the explicit gospel is not just that Jesus died, but that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again on the third day. This is the core of the Christian faith, and it must be spoken clearly and without embarrassment.

Restoration: The Hope of the Future

The final movement is restoration. The gospel does not end with individual salvation; it points forward to the renewal of all things. **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel** reminds readers that God's plan is not to destroy the

world but to redeem and restore it. There will be a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells. This eschatological hope shapes how Christians live in the present. It gives perspective to suffering, motivation for mission, and assurance that the story is heading toward a glorious conclusion. Chandler argues that many Christians have an incomplete gospel because they stop at redemption or even just at personal forgiveness. The explicit gospel includes the cosmic scope of God's redemptive plan—the restoration of all things under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Applied: Implications for the Church and the Christian Life

Throughout **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel**, the author is careful to show that the gospel is not just a set of facts to be believed but a reality to be lived. The explicit gospel has profound implications for how Christians think about church, mission, and everyday life. Chandler challenges the notion that the gospel is only for non-believers. He insists that the gospel is also for believers—that it is the power by which they grow in holiness, overcome sin, and love others. This is what he means by "gospel-centered" living.

For the church, the explicit gospel means that preaching must be centered on Christ and His work, not on moral improvement or practical tips. It means that the sacraments—baptism and communion—must be understood as visible expressions of the gospel. It means that church discipline and discipleship must be rooted in the realities of grace and repentance. **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel** calls pastors and church leaders to be vigilant in ensuring that the gospel remains central in all aspects of ministry. The moment a church drifts from the explicit gospel, it begins to lose its power and its identity.

For the individual Christian, the explicit gospel provides a foundation for assurance, joy, and freedom. Chandler explains that when we truly understand that our salvation is based on the finished work of Christ rather than our performance, we are set free from the cycle of guilt and shame. We can live boldly and honestly before God, knowing that we are accepted in the Beloved. This does not lead to license or laziness; rather, it produces gratitude, worship, and a desire to obey. The explicit gospel transforms our relationship with God from one of fear to one of love.

The Gospel Expanded: The Bigger Picture of God's Glory

One of the most refreshing aspects of **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel** is its insistence on the God-centered nature of salvation. Chandler argues that the gospel is ultimately about the glory of God. It is not a story where humanity is the hero and God is the helper. It is a story where God is the hero, and He saves sinners for His own glory. This theological emphasis has practical consequences. When the gospel is understood as being for God's glory, it takes the pressure off of us to perform or to produce results. It also humbles us, reminding us that we are not the center of the universe.

Chandler also addresses the issue of hell and judgment in this context. He does not flinch from the difficult topics. The explicit gospel includes the reality of eternal punishment for those who reject Christ. While this is a hard truth, Chandler presents it as a necessary part of the gospel message. The love of God is most profoundly seen in the cross, where God Himself bore the penalty for sin so that sinners could be saved. To downplay judgment is to diminish the cross. **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel** calls Christians to hold together the love and justice of God, recognizing that both are essential to the biblical portrait of who God is.

Practical Takeaways: How to Make the Gospel Explicit

1. Preach the Gospel to Yourself Daily: Chandler encourages believers to remind themselves of the gospel every day. This means confessing sin, resting in Christ's finished work, and living in the freedom of grace.
2. Keep the Gospel Central in Church: Pastors and church leaders should evaluate their preaching, teaching, and programs to ensure that the gospel is not being assumed but explicitly proclaimed.
3. Be Willing to Offend: The explicit gospel is inherently offensive because it tells people that they are

sinners in need of a Savior. Chandler urges Christians not to soften the message to make it more palatable.

4. Connect the Gospel to All of Life: The gospel is not just for Sunday morning. It applies to work, family, relationships, and every aspect of human existence.

5. Embrace the Whole Story: Avoid reducing the gospel to a set of bullet points. Embrace the full biblical narrative from creation to restoration.

The Impact and Reception of The Explicit Gospel

Since its release, **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel** has been widely embraced by evangelical audiences. It has been used in small groups, seminary classes, and personal study. The book's strength lies in its ability to communicate deep theological truths in an accessible and engaging way. Chandler's pastoral heart is evident on every page. He writes not as a distant academic but as a shepherd who loves the church and longs to see it grounded in the truth.

Critics of the book might argue that it covers familiar ground or that it could have delved deeper into certain theological nuances. However, the book's purpose is not to break new theological ground but to recover and reassert the central truths of the Christian faith. In this, it succeeds admirably. **Matt Chandler The Explicit Gospel** serves as a powerful antidote to the confusion and compromise that often characterize contemporary Christianity

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