



**Prayer of Thanksgiving:** that Jesus has given us the most important spiritual food in Himself. "Jesus said to them, **"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."** (Joh 6:35 ESV) **"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."**" (Joh 6:51 ESV)

Please do not forget to pray for all the shut-ins and isolated brothers and sisters in our congregations Mrs. Jack and C. Campbell (Fredericton) and J. Steffes (Caribou, Me), Mr. Ross Bathurst, P. Ward (Saint John) and others.

**Open Hand Food Bank – Moncton** - is in need of grocery plastic bags to give out food to those in need. If you are interested in donating your unused grocery bags, you can bring them to church and someone will collect them and bring them over. Those who want to bring food to give to the **Open Food Bank** may do so by bringing to church and giving it to **Michael M.** of the Moncton congregation.

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**ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF August 2018**

Times of worship services: **Moncton** – 10:30 AM every Sunday

In **Saint John**, worship services will be August 12 and 26

**Communion**- on the second and fourth Sunday of the month.

**Address: Moncton**—70 King St. —Sage building;

**Saint John**—50 Newport Cres., Portland United church.

**Friday, October 5 and Saturday, October 6** – Thanksgiving celebration same venue as last year – Congregational Christian Church of Moncton, 1530 Ryan St, Moncton.

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**PRAYER UPDATE:**

Please continue praying for our brothers and sisters in the Lord and for all those who are affected by the terrible forest fires burning in British Columbia (close to 600 as of last reports) as well as those who are negatively affected by the smoke in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Please also pray for those affected by the other huge forest fires burning in Ontario and the USA.

**The good news of the gospel is a message to be shared with others.** Please pray that God will give us the love and wisdom to be able to share this message with others in a loving, clear and confident matter as we participate in his missional work on the earth in our generation. **"5 ¶ Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."** (Col 4:5-6 ESV)

**Please pray** that God will put an end to the senseless violence happening every in our North America continent and other parts of the world.

**Pray that we will see the good works that God has prepared for us in advance** so that we can enthusiastically participate in the on-going work He is doing now on this earth in bringing people in relationship with him in Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

**Please pray, as per Jesus instructions, the disciples prayer, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. <sup>10</sup>Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:9-10)** as our world is suffering so much and in need of complete restoration by the King of kings, Jesus. As we are his royal priesthood, let us proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, as we are instructed in 1 Peter 2.

**Pray for the world and for all people:** we live in a world that does not know the way to peace. Important to pray as we are instructed by the apostle Paul — **"1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,"** (1Ti 2:1–3 ESV)

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## **Thankful That We Are Evangelicals**

Posted by GCI Update on August 15, 2018 under [From the President](#) |  
This "From the President" letter is by GCI Vice President Greg Williams.  
Dear GCI Brothers and Sisters,



Greg and Susan Williams

Unfortunately, many people (including some Christians) associate the term *evangelical* more with political and sociological positions than with the sincerely-held faith of a large group of Christians spread throughout the world. This misunderstanding is due in large part to the way the media uses the term *evangelical*, though it also results from organizations and individuals who, calling themselves evangelicals, espouse very conservative (even extreme) political and social ideologies.

When we refer to GCI as being *evangelical*, we are using that term, not politically or sociologically, but theologically. To say that we are evangelicals is to say that we identify with



Jesus Christ, who is the heart and core of the gospel (the *evangel*). The same can be said for the 40+ organizations (including GCI) that make up the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). In the U.S., GCI has held NAE membership for many years. We also hold membership in similar organizations outside the U.S. While NAE members may not agree on all issues, they all are theologically evangelical—sharing a commitment to orthodox Christian doctrine and a passion to make Christ known to a lost and hurting world.

Through attending NAE meetings, I've come to know this organization as one that holds true to Christian orthodoxy, desires greater understanding and engagement with the culture, and demonstrates a humble spirit of self-reflection. I have been impressed with the quality of the speakers at NAE gatherings. They help NAE members grow in understanding how the gospel relates to the challenging and often divisive issues we face in today's world. These issues include homosexuality, gender dysphoria, a worldwide refugee crisis, and Muslims in America. At one NAE gathering, we toured the U.S. capital and heard from members of Congress who are Democrats and Republicans. The goal of NAE President Leith Anderson is not to espouse sociological positions or political agendas, but to help the leaders of NAE member organizations gain a more fully Christ-centered, gospel-shaped perspective on what is going on in the world. The approach NAE takes to current (often controversial and divisive) issues within our culture is something I hope to see reflected more and more in the approach taken throughout the ranks in GCI. It's a challenge for us to think with the mind of Christ about these issues instead of thinking out of a perspective limited by our life experiences (our context). [Mark Labberton](#), President of Fuller Seminary, puts it this way:



Mark Labberton

It is striking that our context is the most pervasive influence that shapes us, even if we profess Jesus as Lord. A pure Christian identity isn't available, because we all live immersed in context. Dr. Labberton also notes that we all need "a new social location"—a new mindset that results from the union and communion we have with Christ, by the Spirit. In GCI, we aspire to have that mindset—what we refer to as a [Christ-centered worldview](#). We then seek to work across denominational lines with others who share this worldview. We come together through the NAE and other venues, not to justify ourselves, but to hear a fresh word from the Lord, who speaks to us all through Scripture and brings us all to see whatever blindness we may still suffer from.

GCI and all NAE members aspire to be *evangels* who, with the Spirit's guidance and empowerment, faithfully follow Jesus and his gospel. As evangelicals, we seek to witness to the truth that is in Jesus, who alone has the power to save. We strive to rise above personal hurts, prejudices and societal trends to confidently follow in Jesus' footsteps. We seek to grow in Jesus' faith, humility and compassion, including his commitment to justice and righteousness for the dignity of all people.

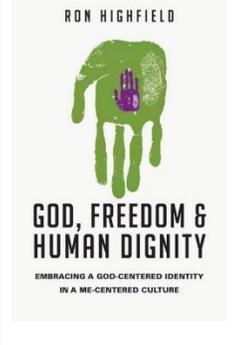
One of the benefits I derive personally from GCI's NAE membership is the joy of rubbing shoulders with leaders from other denominations that share with GCI a commitment to Jesus and his gospel. I find them to be both encouraging and wise. It's extremely helpful to me to talk with them about what they have experienced, and to compare notes about all manner of shared concerns and experiences.

I pray that we in GCI will grow in our evangelical commitments and practices. I pray we'll be even more passionate in expressing the love and life of Jesus through our actions, and in sharing the truth of his gospel in our conversations.

Thankful that we are evangelicals,  
Greg Williams

PS: For help in approaching, with the mind of Christ, the challenging (and often divisive) ethical issues that arise in our world, be sure to read the *Worldview Conversion* series currently running in *GCI Equipper*—[click here](#) for the first article.

## Ethics and personal identity

	<p>In <a href="#">God, Freedom &amp; Human Dignity: Embracing a God-Centered Identity in a Me-Centered Culture</a>, Ron Highfield (professor of religion at Pepperdine University) notes the debates raging within and without Christian circles concerning questions related to <i>ethics</i>: How should we live? On what do we base our answers? Highfield notes that the trinitarian, Christo-logic of the gospel answers these questions by pointing to the related topic of <i>identity</i>. Why identity? Because that is where Scripture takes us, in line with the truth that we humans tend to live in alignment with our sense of personal identity.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Embracing a God-centered identity</b></p> <p>The gospel declares that our God-given identity is found not within ourselves, but in Jesus, in whom divinity and humanity are permanently united in one Person. As we, by the Holy Spirit,</p>
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embrace our true identity in Christ, we are set free from the bondage created by embracing the me-centered identity (with its worldview) that is dominant in most of the Western world.



Many people today (including some Christians), bristle at the idea that their true identity is to be found outside themselves—especially when you tell them its location is in the humanity of Jesus. Why? Because most people think God has an agenda to deny them freedom and thus personal dignity. They see God as a rigid, perhaps grumpy parent who wants his children under strict control. But that is not the nature of the God revealed to us in Jesus. Jesus says that to know him is to know the Father ([John 14:9](#)) and that to follow him is not to lose our freedom but

to gain it ([John 8:36](#)).

Jesus brings us true freedom by sharing with us his humanity (which is true humanity). Highfield comments: *Christ pioneered the way to truly human life in which human beings achieve their deepest potential for freedom.... In Christ we find an identity rooted not in others' changing thoughts about us but in God's eternal knowledge of us. Through the Spirit, God enables us to achieve the perfect freedom of life in harmony with our truest identity. (pp. 13, 14)*

### Rejecting a me-centered identity

The Holy Spirit leads us to seek and embrace our true, God-given identity in Jesus Christ. But doing so inevitably brings us up against the secular worldview of our me-centered age. Highfield comments:

*Modern culture denies that one can become an authentic person or experience fulfillment in life by conforming to natural or socially given relationships and roles. Instead we are taught that our self-worth and happiness depend on reconstructing ourselves according to our desires. (p. 17)*

In the first chapter of his book, Highfield sketches out the historical journey through which a me-centered conception of personal identity arose and became dominant within Western culture. He examines the thoughts of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Descartes, Locke, Rousseau and others—ideas and ideals that have profoundly shaped the secular, me-centered worldview that now dominates in the Western world. A key element in that worldview is the issue of freewill (self-determinism). As Descartes wrote, *"Nothing but freewill can produce our greatest contentment."* In step with that worldview, we moderns want to be able to remake ourselves in any way we choose.

With this ideology fully in place via the Enlightenment, "the stage was set for declaring God completely unnecessary for living a flourishing human life" (p. 28). Over time, this thinking largely prevailed, and individualism and self-determinism won the day. Highfield summarizes:

*The modern self is me-centered. Most people are not self-centered in the crass sense of being selfish or narcissistic; nevertheless they locate all values and sources of fulfillment within the self, in its feelings, preferences, thoughts, opinions and wishes. Even when they cannot articulate it this way, they ground the respect they feel for others in such inward qualities as autonomy, inner desires and unique inner depth that requires expression. [To them] it would seem odd to ground respect for others in something extrinsic, such as divine creation or divine love or a divine command. Withholding respect from others because of their choices or desires or ways of self-expression strikes our contemporaries as irrational and hateful. (p. 31)*

As a result of this secular worldview, contemporary society has largely lost an ability to meaningfully discuss moral-ethical issues. What passes for rational debate in Western culture often is nothing more than the assertion of personal preferences with no grounding in a realization of the essential elements of human nature and its ultimate goal and purpose (end, or *telos*). Those who seek to ground such discussions in a Christ-centered worldview are definitely “swimming upstream” against the strong current of a modern, me-centered view of human identity. Highfield comments: *The current moral culture was founded on rejection of the traditional claim that human beings are given their essence and end [telos] by God... Many of our contemporaries exhibit a viscerally negative reaction to assertions of authority, pretense of objectivity or arguments to truth in the moral sphere.... To many people, Christian calls for obedience to the divine law, for repentance and moral transformation sound like recipes for oppression. (p. 38)*

### **Me-centered reactions to God**

According to Highfield, the secular Western world of our day tends to react to God (or the idea of God) in one of three ways:

**1. Defiance:** a reaction grounded in the idea that God and humanity are competitors. This reaction reflects the defiant individualism and self-determinism represented in the poem *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley, which concludes with this stanza:

*It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.*

**2. Subservience:** a reaction Highfield calls “default religion.” This reaction involves seeking to give God his due in order to avoid his wrath and secure his favor. Though doing so might feel like serving God, this reaction takes people in a direction that badly misrepresents the nature of God and never brings about the true freedom it seeks. Why? Because it substitutes religion for God, and in that way is idolatrous. The truth of the gospel is that true religion—defined as loving God and loving people—is not about religious subservience, which has to do with self-effort, but about the freedom that comes through true religion, which is a gift from God made available to us in and through Jesus, by the Holy Spirit.

**3. Indifference:** a reaction that includes atheism, though it is not limited to it. Indifference involves various strategies by which people “immerse themselves in the practical affairs of life, in pleasure seeking or in maintaining an illusory identity” (p. 64).

### **Our sense of self**

Whether the reaction to God is defiance, subservience or indifference, it’s a sad fact that in seeking freedom and dignity for themselves, many (if not most) moderns in the West define the self apart from its relationships with other humans and with the triune God who created us for relationship. In doing so, they ground their sense of worth (and thus their dignity) in all sorts of things. But the reality, which is revealed to us in Holy Scripture, is that our true worth as humans is found in one place only—the love the triune God has for us all. Highfield comments:

*We know that God loves us no less than God loves himself, because God does not love us for what we are. God’s love for us is grounded in the Father’s love for the Son.... By loving us with the love of God, God bestows on us the highest dignity conceivable and frees us for the most perfect freedom possible. (pp. 205, 206)*

Through the incarnation of the Son of God and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, our humanity is united to God in the most intimate way. Rather than diminishing our personhood, that union establishes it, for in Jesus Christ we are united both with God and with all people. This union is the source of our true humanity, and thus of our personal freedom and dignity.

We see this personal (“personalizing”) freedom and dignity in the Holy Trinity in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit find their identity as Persons in the love they share for one another. The same is true for God’s design for humans for we are created in God’s image. God does not define love as independent of others—his love is other-centered. Jesus therefore calls on us to see our neighbor’s good as our own (“love your neighbor as yourself,” he said). As Highfield notes, “*The ideal implicit even in human love is a union between persons that rules out competition without erasing distinction*” (p. 209).

On this side of glorification, we do not love perfectly. Despite our faith, we still compete, even with the ones we love the most. So how then should we live in the midst of our brokenness on this side of glory? The answer is that we live with, in and through our Lord Jesus, by the Holy Spirit. This is the life of faith, hope and love ([1 Cor. 13:13](#)): In faith, we trust in and rely on the perfection of Jesus (including his perfect, glorified humanity). In hope we look forward to the perfection we will one day experience with Christ in a new heaven and new earth. And we receive from God his love by which we love God and other people. In Christ and by the Spirit, we are set free to love and to be loved—free to share in God’s love for all people, ourselves included.

This love is not ours by merely mimicking Jesus. We don't "love like Jesus loves" in ways that are somehow disconnected from Jesus himself. Instead, we love with, in and through him, by the Spirit. This means that we love others with the love by which God, in Jesus and by the Spirit, is loving us and loving them. Jesus is the source—the fount—and by the Spirit he freely shares with us his perfect, other-centered love for God and for all people. Our true humanity (identity and dignity) is found not in ourselves, but in (and with) him. Highfield concludes his book with this statement:

*God is so much for us and we are made so much for God that only by returning ourselves to God utterly may we become truly ourselves and live life to the full. In loving God for God's sake alone we will find genuine freedom, and in allowing ourselves to be loved by God we will discover our true dignity. (p. 217)*

### **Conclusion**

Enlightened by God's Word and Spirit, we are able to discern that the secular worldview that now dominates much of the Western world is nothing but an illusion—a failed attempt to be like God. We also are able to discern that a Christ-centered worldview is grounded in the reality that the eternal Son of God, in the person of Jesus, has entered into the human condition, has overcome our fallenness, and opened to us the possibility to be who we truly are in him—our true selves, beloved children of God.

As this series of *Equipper* articles on the topic of worldview conversion unfolds, we'll examine more closely the distinctions between a secular and a Christ-centered worldview. We'll also examine various ethical issues, not merely to gain knowledge, but so that we can minister within the world in ways that are real participation in the disciple-making work that Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, is now doing.

**GCI principle** website and Moncton Websites—[www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org), [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca), [www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton](https://www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton); For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. *Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email—[evautour47@outlook.com](mailto:evautour47@outlook.com)*