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# gospel MEDITATIONS *for* PRAYER

CHRIS ANDERSON  
JOE TYRPAK  
AND CARL TRÜEMAN

gospel  
MEDITATIONS  
for  
PRAYER

“Brief and biblical, these thirty-one meditations are full of sharp edges. They lead us to pray as cross-bearing disciples of Christ. Yet Anderson, Tyrpak, and Trueman comfort us with Christ’s perfect grace for fallen people. So *Gospel Meditations for Prayer* is an encouraging book, but one designed to stretch you.”

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“Prayer is more than just talking to God or asking things from God. Such a truncated view of prayer overlooks the prior necessity of a relationship with God. That’s why a proper understanding of prayer requires a proper understanding of the gospel, that is, the message about having a relationship with God. This book by Chris Anderson, Joe Tyrpak, and Carl Trueman is a signpost at the intersection of prayer and the gospel that provides practical direction on both subjects.”

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“Rich in the Word and rich in Christ, *Gospel Meditations for Prayer* is soul-nourishing, prayer-inducing reading. Chris, Joe, and Carl point us to a great God who gives us great incentives to pray.”

—**Danny Brooks**, pastor for twenty-five years at Heritage Bible Church in Greer, SC; now church planter in Utah with Plant for the Gospel

“An apple a day keeps the doctor away,’ or so my mother told me as a boy. But a surer aphorism would be ‘a Scripture meditation a day keeps the devil at bay.’ And here, three tried and trusted men take you into the Scriptures and provide you with a brief meditation designed to be fodder for thought and prayer—an ideal method to begin each day for a month. Gospel-saturated insights designed for the likes of you and me.”

—**Derek Thomas**, senior minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC, professor of Systematic and Practical Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Atlanta, and author of several books including *Making the Most of Your Devotional Life*

“God’s people need the gospel, and God’s people need to pray. What a blessing to have a resource that brings those two things together!”

—**Jim Hamilton**, professor of Biblical Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, pastor of Kenwood Baptist Church at Victory Memorial, and author of *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment*

“John Newton wrote, ‘Thou art coming to a King; large petitions with thee bring. For His grace and power are such, none can ever ask too much.’ Pray big. This devotional helps.”

—**Andy Naselli**, professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minneapolis, elder at Bethlehem Baptist Church, and author of *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament, Conscience, and No Quick Fix*

## INTRODUCTION

My brother Jeff was recently asked how long a particular sermon took to prepare. “About forty years,” was his reply. There’s something to that. This book of meditations for prayer wasn’t prepared over weeks or months. There’s a lifetime of lessons here. That’s not to say that the three writers are great examples of faithful prayer. We’d all object to that, vehemently! But prayer is something we have learned—we *are learning*—through a lifetime of Bible study, and sin, and confession, and anxiety, and dependence. And mercifully and mightily, God answers, in spite of us.

I’m grateful for a father who modeled prayer, especially prayers of adoration. I thank God for giving me a love for private prayer as a teenager, especially for the sweet times kneeling each week in an empty church building (which I was supposed to be cleaning). I’m grateful that I learned early in my ministry as a church planting pastor that I am utterly dependent on God to do what I cannot. I grieve at my prayerlessness, but I can say with humility and certainty that my need for God’s grace is an ever-present reality in my life. And so I pray.

I’m grateful for Carl Trueman, one of the most insightful and articulate church historians and theologians of our time. In spite of a dizzying array of responsibilities, Carl agreed to labor with us to remind fellow believers of our ongoing need of Christ and of our shocking privilege of an audience with the Almighty through the gospel. Carl is a professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He is a lover and defender of the gospel, and I’m certain that his contributions will be good for Christ’s church.

I’m thankful for Joe Tyrpak. For almost eight years we were blessed to labor together at Tri-County Bible Church in Madison, Ohio. Upon my move to Killian Hill Baptist Church in Lilburn, Georgia, Joe took on the responsibilities of lead pastor at TCBC, and he’s done exceedingly well. I miss working with him—and especially praying with him!—but I rejoice that the Lord has multiplied our ministries. Joe has been my dear friend, and my beloved pastor. He writes on prayer as one who knows it and needs it. I’ve knelt with him, and wept with him, and rejoiced with him in prayer. I assure you that he can teach you much.

Finally, thanks to Abby Huffstutler, who once again has edited and re-edited to make us look more coherent than we really are.

As with *Gospel Meditations for Women*, and *Men*, and *Missions*—I urge you to dive into the Scriptures themselves. These devotionals will be a poor substitute indeed for the inspired Word of God. But they’ll bless you if you use them as a tool to help you in your search of the true and timeless Treasure. I pray that these meditations will help you to pray more—and pray better.

May the Lord alone be glorified (Psalm 115:1). Grace!

Chris Anderson, *editor and contributing author*

DAY 1.

# I've Got Nothing

“In vain . . . in vain . . . in vain . . .”—Psalm 127:1–2

“I’ve got nothing.” That’s one of my mantras. Walking around the church I pastor, asking for God’s help as I strive to lead it well, I shrug and confess aloud that “I’ve got nothing.” On my way to the pulpit, preparing to preach, I mumble under my breath that “I’ve got nothing.” Even preaching to people, and urging them to run to Christ and not to me, I admit that “I’ve got nothing.” I don’t say that because I’m humble, or godly. The opposite is true. I pray it because I’m painfully aware of my frailty. I say it because it’s crystal clear to me that I am urgently, deeply, desperately in need of God’s grace. The answer to my needs, the needs of my family, and the needs of my church is Christ. So I pray—almost constantly—for God to do what I cannot.

That’s the heartbeat of prayer, isn’t it? We pray because we’re convinced of our insufficiency. We pray because we know that Christ’s words in John 15:5 are true: “Without me, you can do nothing.” We pray because we are haunted by our impotence and humbled by God’s omnipotence.

Psalm 127:1–2 drives this point home. Again and again the text reminds us how “vain” our best efforts are apart from God’s work. It is *vain* to labor on a temple (or home, or church, or any other endeavor) unless the Lord is building (v. 1a). It is *vain* to defend a city (or business, or mission, or family) unless the Lord is protecting (v. 1b). It is *vain* to “rise up early, stay up late, and stress ourselves out” (my loose translation) as if we’re sovereign—because we’re not (v. 2a). We’re weak, as evidenced by the fact that we spend one-third to one-fourth of our lives sleeping (v. 2b). We can’t do it (whatever “it” is). We’re not enough. We’ve got nothing.

So do we give up? No. We pray. We ask God to bless our labors by building our homes—both through us, and in spite of us—so that our labor isn’t wasted (v. 1a). We ask God to protect our children and ministries—both through us, and in spite of us—so that our watching makes a difference (v. 1b). We pray and we work, exercising what I call “diligent dependence.” And then, having done our best and having asked God to show His strength where we are weak, we *sleep*. We sleep as though God were good, and powerful, and sovereign. And He is. And He works. And He does what we knew all along we could not.

Whatever God has called you to do is too big for you. You can’t plant a church. You can’t raise a godly family. You can’t save people. You can’t grow people in the faith. You can’t even grow *yourself* in the faith. You might as well embrace your limitations. Say it, out loud: “I’ve got nothing.” Then, despairing of any hope but Christ, appeal to Him for grace—what William Hendriksen defines as “God’s spontaneous, unmerited favor in action” (*New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*, p. 71). See if God’s grace isn’t more than sufficient for you. Labor faithfully. Pray. And then rest. Because when you’ve got nothing—and *know it*—you’re ready to see all the “something” He’s got at His disposal, for His glory.

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Sufficient God, answer the prayers of Your needy people and manifest Your might as we confess our frailty. Overcome our weakness with Your power. Overcome our folly with Your wisdom. Overcome our sin with Your grace. And we, who have nothing in ourselves, will have everything in You, and we will be jealous to give glory to no other. Amen.—CHRIS

## DAY 2.

## Cry for Wisdom

“If you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding . . .”—PROVERBS 2:3

Wisdom, according to the Bible, has nothing to do with how well you did on your SATs, with how many books you’ve read, or with your abilities in logical debate. Wisdom is a different kind of skill. (Notice in Exodus 28:3; 35:25; and 36:1 that *skillfulness* is the essential meaning of the Hebrew word that is translated *wisdom*.) Biblical wisdom is the skill of pleasing God that comes as a result of a personal, submissive relationship with Him—a relationship that affects every choice in your life.

No one comes into the world with wisdom. Instead, all people are born with “no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:18)—minor league fools who, given a little time, will work their way up to the majors. Foolishness comes naturally; wisdom doesn’t. Foolishness comes from within, wisdom from without.

So how does anyone get wisdom? Simple. Wisdom comes to those who pray for it. Moses asked God for it (Psalm 90:12). Solomon requested it (1 Kings 3:5–10) and taught his children to cry out for it (Proverbs 2:1–6). Jesus commanded His disciples to ask, seek, and knock for it (Matthew 7:7; notice the context of the chapter), and James urged believers to pray for it (James 1:5). A life of wisdom does *not* come in answer to a one-time, apathetic prayer for it; rather, wisdom comes to those who persistently and passionately beat down the door of heaven for it! And, when people today cry out for wisdom, God gives them Jesus, Jesus, and more Jesus.

***Only those who come to God through Christ are wise.*** Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7; Ecclesiastes 12:13), which refers to a relationship with God on the basis of repentant faith. Job explained it that way: “The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and turning away from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28). New Testament Christians understand the core of wisdom the same way, only with clearer definition: “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Wisdom begins with a personal relationship with God (Proverbs 10:9), and the only way to God is through Christ. The fear of the Lord equals faith in Jesus. Sinner, cry out: “Give me Jesus!”

***Only those who know Christ are wise.*** Jesus Christ is the Wisdom of God incarnate. He was “filled with wisdom” and “increased in wisdom and stature” (Luke 2:40, 52). He preached that wisdom comes to those who build their lives on Him (Matthew 7:24) and that He is “something greater than Solomon” (Matthew 11:19; 12:42). Many who heard Jesus talk responded in amazement: “Where did this man get this wisdom?” (Matthew 13:54). Christians are those who trust in the crucified Messiah as the wisest, most glorious Design in all of history (1 Corinthians 1–2). And, throughout life’s trials, Christians remain assured that “in [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom” (Colossians 2:3). In the end, every believer will ascribe all wisdom to the enthroned Lamb (Revelation 5:12; 7:12). So, wisdom equals knowing Jesus. Believer, may the ever-increasing cry of your life be, “Give me Jesus!”

***Only those intoxicated with Christ’s Spirit are wise.*** Paul urged Christians to walk wisely, not foolishly. He explained that a wise person studies the Spirit-inspired Word, is sensitive to the indwelling Spirit’s leading, and thus will be controlled by God’s Spirit (Ephesians 5:15–18). And, just as drunkenness with alcohol leads to foolish debauchery, drunkenness with the Spirit leads to saturation with Christ: talking about Him to others, singing to Him with others, trusting Him in trials, and humbly submitting to others like He did. That’s no surprise since the Spirit’s job is to magnify Jesus. So, wisdom equals Christ-saturation. Christian, cry out for the Spirit’s control: “Give me Jesus!”

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O Lord, I’m a sinner, a fool. Forgive me through Christ. Help me to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the One greater than Solomon. Spirit, control me and conform me to Christ’s image. Give me Jesus! Give me Jesus! Give me Jesus! All for His glory. Amen.—JOE

DAY 3.

# Compassion for the Unclean

“Taking her by the hand he said to her, ‘Talitha cumi,’ which means ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’”—MARK 5:41

Mark 5 is a chapter of great uncleanness. There is the man who is literally occupied by a legion of unclean demons and who lives among the tombs in an area where the local economy is built on pig breeding. That is about as unclean as you can find. Then there is the poor woman who is perpetually menstruating and thus rendered perpetually unclean. Finally, there is the little girl who has died. Corpses—and death—are the ultimate of the ultimate in unclean things.

We need to understand the implications of this uncleanness. An unclean person in Israel could not touch anyone else, either directly or indirectly, without spreading the contamination and rendering more people unclean. If the demoniac had ever had friends, they would long since have gone, for who could risk being around an unclean madman? If the woman was married, she could not have made love to her husband, or even have held his hand for many years. More likely, if she had ever been married, she would now be utterly alone. And the little girl had been torn from her family. The sorrow there needs no further comment.

Yet, with each of these unclean characters, Jesus had direct contact. We are specifically told that He touched the little girl. That should have made Him unclean, but it actually made her clean. The woman touched Him. Old Testament law is clear that that, too, should have made Him unclean, even though the contact was not intentional on His part. He should have been made unclean, but she was made clean. And while we are not told that the demoniac touched Jesus, a natural reading of the passage would seem to imply that there was contact.

Perhaps as you read this you feel unclean. Maybe you have looked at a webpage you know you should have avoided. Maybe you spoke badly to your spouse or your children. Maybe you did something that makes you feel dirty. The Devil’s oldest trick is to tell people like you that they are too dirty for God, that this time they have gone too far and cannot turn to God because they will make God dirty. That is a lie. As this chapter shows, when the dirty is touched by the divine, the divine is not sullied, but the dirty is made clean.

As you pray today, reflect on these incidents, and not simply on the amazing cleansing that took place. They are truly wonderful and point clearly to Christ as Savior. But reflect also on the compassion of God which these stories display. Christ not only saved these people; He touched them. He accepted them in their filthy condition. The woman that had perhaps neither touched nor been touched by anyone for many years was allowed to touch God manifest in the flesh, and was called by Him “daughter.” That is a deep revelation of the heart of God Himself, one that invites us to come to Him despite our filth, and one that demands that we respond to Him with worship and adoration.

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Lord God and Father, You know me better than I know myself. You know the darkest corners of my mind and the blackest secrets of my heart. You know that even my highest deeds of righteousness are as filthy rags before You. Lord, may Your Spirit teach me repentance, and may I reach out in faith and touch Christ through Your Word. May I thus be made clean and stand before You clothed in the glorious robes of Christ’s own pure righteousness. Amen.—CARL

DAY 4.

# Pray to the Father

“Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”—MATTHEW 6:8

In Matthew 5–7 the Lord Jesus introduced the “platform” of His kingdom. He didn’t speak of defense, or taxation, or healthcare. He spoke against hypocrisy (“be not as the hypocrites”) and in favor of private piety (“go into your closet”). He spoke against religious formalism (“you have heard”) and in favor of heart righteousness (“but I say unto you”). He spoke against materialism (“you cannot serve God and money”) and in favor of spiritual investment (“seek first the kingdom of God”). All the while, again and again and again (sixteen times in the three chapters), He pointed His hearers to God as their heavenly Father, especially in His instructions about prayer: “Pray like this: ‘Our Father in heaven.’” Generally speaking, biblical prayer is directed to God the Father—which is amazing. Think about it:

*When we say, “Our Father,” we pray to a God Who is great (6:9–10).* The audience of true prayer is God—not our peers, despite the perverse performance of hypocrites who use prayer as a stage (6:1, 6, 18). We make too little of this astounding idea: In prayer we are addressing God, Who is in heaven. He is transcendent, far above us. And yet . . .

*When we say, “Our Father,” we pray to a God Who is relational (6:9–10).* The God to Whom we pray is *knowable*—a *Father*. Beyond that, He is *ownable*—our Father. Prayer is principally the enjoyment of God Himself. We seek His face, not just His hands. We delight in His presence, not His presents, as A.W. Tozer states so unforgettably in *The Pursuit of God*: “Lift up [your] heart unto God with a meek stirring of love; and mean Himself, and none of His goods.” Prayer is relationship, not just requests.

*When we say, “Our Father,” we pray to a God Who is attentive (6:8, 26, 32).* Jesus repeatedly reminds us that our Father knows what we need. This, Christ says, should end anxiety. God has a track record. For thousands of years He has made the sun rise on the evil and the just. For thousands of years He has clothed the fields. For thousands of years He has fed the birds. And we matter more. Though He delights in our requests, we don’t need to inform Him. He knows what we need.

*When we say, “Our Father,” we pray to a God Who is generous (6:1, 4, 6, 18; 7:7–11).* God is benevolent. He delights to reward His children (6:1, 4, 6, 18). He gives only good gifts (7:7–11). Jesus says that the example of our earthly fathers should teach us as much. Jesus’ allusion to earthly fathers reminds me that as kind as my dad is, I have a far greater Father. For others, tragically, Jesus’ allusion brings to mind a negligent or abusive father. In either circumstance, however good or bad our earthly father may be, we have a perfect heavenly Father.

*When we say, “Our Father,” we pray to a God Who is forgiving (6:12–15).* Jesus tells us to ask our Father to forgive us. The Father is glad to answer such requests—but only from His children. Not all people have the joy of calling their Creator their Father, and not all people have the relief of forgiven sins. Only those who have repented of their sins and trusted Jesus Christ as Savior can address God as “Father” (John 1:12). Those who don’t yet know Christ are instead called children of this age (Luke 20:34), children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2), children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3), children of darkness (1 Thessalonians 5:5), and even children of the Devil (John 8:44). If you know Christ, rejoice that He has made His Father *yours*. And if you don’t yet know Christ—*what are you waiting for?*

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Father, thank You for knowing us and loving us anyway. Thank You for adopting us and treating us as Your beloved children. What astounding love! We love You in return, and we pray that others will as well. Amen.—CHRIS



## DAY 5.

## Pray Big

“That you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”—EPHESIANS 3:19

Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21 may contain the biggest prayer request in all the Bible, even bigger than Joshua’s commanding the sun to stand still (Joshua 10)! Paul believed that God could do more than he even dreamed. What was Paul’s *gigantic* prayer in Ephesians 3? Paul prayed that a normal, gospel-preaching church comprised of saved sinners from the city of Ephesus would be filled with all of God’s perfections. That’s all.

*Pray big—that your church family would know Christ’s fathomless love.* In this Trinitarian prayer Paul prays that the Messiah would be at home in believers’ hearts. The moment that you turned from sin and accepted Jesus as Savior, He took up residence in your body through the Holy Spirit. (As Paul teaches in Romans 8:9, if Christ doesn’t dwell in you, you’re not a Christian.) However, Jesus should be able to say of you, “With every year that passes, his/her heart becomes more and more ‘home’ to Me. I’m more settled there than I’ve ever been.” To enjoy Christ’s settled presence is to know Christ’s love—He forgives your frequent sins, He’s patient with your slow growth, and He’s committed to work in you until you look like Him.

Paradoxically, Christians need to *know* the love of Christ that *surpasses knowledge*. Christ’s love is infinitely wide and long and high and deep. From Ephesians 1-3 we know that Christ’s love is as wide as the Gentile world, longer than time itself, higher than the heavens from which Christ has rained down His rich kindnesses on you, and deeper than the grave where Christ went to find you in your sins. Christian, do you know that God loves you, that He’s always loved you, and that He loved you even before you were created? Do you realized that He loved you even when you were under His wrath? Pray that you and your church would really grasp that love.

*Pray big—that your church family would show Christ’s love in all its fullness.* Paul writes, “I want you to comprehend Christ’s love *with all the saints*.” As John Stott aptly taught, “It needs the whole people of God to understand the whole love of God” (*Ephesians*, p. 137). Knowing His love is not simply a devotional pursuit, something for you to appreciate on your own. The goal of knowing Christ’s love is that the whole church would be filled with all the fullness of God—that we’d be filled with the same thing that fills God—that the perfections of *God* would fill *us*. That’s astounding!

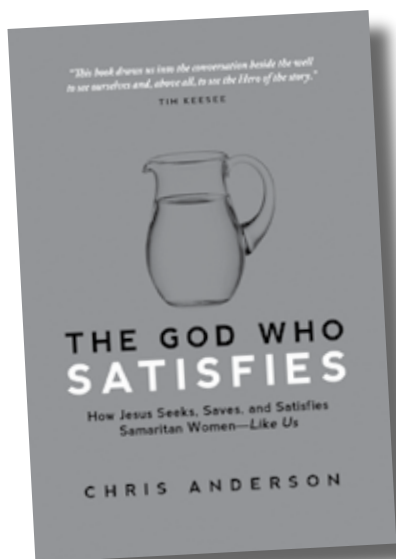
What would the fullness of God look like in a church? As Paul teaches in Ephesians 4-6, a church filled with God’s fullness would be humble and unified, holy and obedient, loving and submissive. Jesus essentially taught the same: that God’s fullness would be evident when Christians are full of love and unity—the love and unity that exist eternally between God the Father and God the Son (John 17:26). Bottom line: A church that’s filled with God’s fullness looks like Jesus. (Notice how Paul uses “fullness” in Ephesians 4:13.) God’s goal for Christians individually and corporately is nothing less than entire conformity to Christ, in Whom all of God’s fullness dwells bodily (Colossians 1:19; 2:9).

Unity. Holiness. Love. Complete Christlikeness. Do you think that God could ever do that in your church? He most definitely will. How much do you think He can do on this side of glory? Pray today that God would do beyond what you dream. Pray big.

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Father, help me and all the saints in my church to comprehend Jesus’ love—that He loved us when we were dead and that He is committed to love us to the end. May we know Your love and show Your love, so that when outsiders are present with us, they’d see Your love, Your holiness, and Your unity in us. Lord, I’m doubtful that I or my church will ever be what You desire. We’re so far from what we should be. Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! Do beyond what I can imagine. For Your glory. Amen.—JOE

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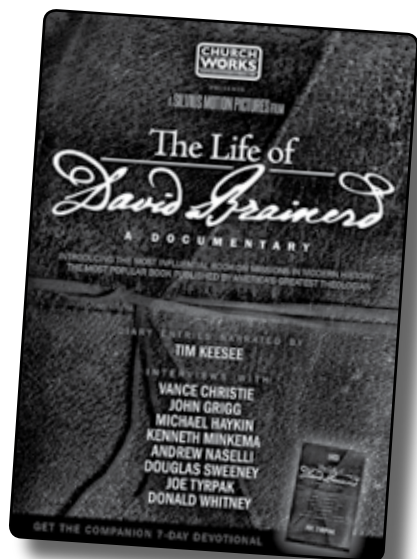


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"This DVD documentary represents an excellent introduction to the life and ministry of the famed missionary. Together the interviewees paint a picture of Brainerd that is informed by the best scholarship, is honest about his various struggles and failures, but remains warmly sympathetic to Brainerd's life, thought, and missionary zeal. The film itself reflects quality craftsmanship and includes many beautiful shots of locations that were prominent in Brainerd's life, original manuscripts of his writings, and portraits, statues, and other memorials of figures discussed in the documentary. The film should prove a helpful resource for use in local church Sunday School classes, small groups, and discussion groups."

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University and writer for the Jonathan Edwards  
Center at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School



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### *About the Authors*



**CHRIS ANDERSON** has pastored since 1997. He's the senior pastor of Killian Hill Baptist Church in Lilburn, Georgia. He has written dozens of modern hymns published by Church Works Media and has published two full-length books, *The God Who Satisfies* and *Panosian*. He and his wife, Lori, have four daughters.



**JOE TYRPAK** has served as a pastor of Tri-County Bible Church in Madison, Ohio, since 2005. He recently produced a DVD, *The Life of David Brainerd: A Documentary*, and a companion devotional. He and his wife, Hannah, have four children.



**CARL TRUEMAN** is an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and professor of Biblical and Religious Studies at Grove City College. He is the author of *Grace Alone*, *Luther on the Christian Life*, and *The Wages of Sin*. He and his wife, Catriona, have two sons.

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