

“Do” Parts 1 & 2, Spring Training, 2007

The gospel powerful unto salvation [heart]& the gospel powerful unto growth [life]

Last week I argued that for those we know, or those we see in Church, we are most likely to be all comfort & no call. For those we do not know, our neighbors, our co-workers, we are most likely to be all call and no comfort.

Last week we looked at the desperate need to extend the call of Christ to everyone around us all the time. I quoted from **Proverbs 27:5-6** ⁵ Better is open rebuke than hidden love. ⁶ Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy” and we looked at how Christ cuts us wounds us with his Word because he loves us,...and how he calls us to do likewise in the form of correction, rebuke, reproof, & instruction.

But it struck me that I’m assuming something major, that we do not need to revisit how to share the comfort of Christ with those in and out of the church in specific ways.

Paul Tripp’s book is not meant for helping us interact with non-Christians,...but my major point has been that many people who act like Jesus do not know Jesus, and they need him. People in the Church need to hear about Christ, you and I need to hear about Jesus.

And, of course, as we get more and more people who come to various camps or what-have-you, we will also be rubbing shoulders & forming relationships with those who do not act like Jesus & do not know Him,...and they too need to hear about Jesus.

I want you to answer these questions right now silently: Do you need Jesus? Do you need to hear about Jesus? Do you thirst for living water?

If you answer yes to those questions then you are as desperately in need of Jesus as anyone you will ever meet. And *that* will be reflected in your relationships & in your words with anyone else you will ever meet. You are as desperately in need of the comfort of Christ & call of Christ as that person you are sitting next to, work with, as the children you raise.

If I have moved beyond my personal need for Jesus,

- 1 – I will only extend the call of the gospel because that’s the theme of my heart
- 2 – I will stand “above” the person I’m speaking to, and speak “down” to them,...
- 3 – My words will draw that person closer to me & relying on my wisdom

Another batch of questions for us: Do you believe the gospel is powerful to change your heart? Has your heart been changed by the gospel? Do you believe the gospel is powerful to change lives? Has your life been changed through Christ?

If not,...

1 – we will feel an itching burning desire to garnish the gospel to make it more “powerful” and effective

[personality garnish, rhetorical flare, razzle & dazzle, promises the Bible doesn’t make]

2 – we will hesitate in communicating the gospel because we’re not entirely confident that’s what our teenager, our 4 year-old, our 90 year old parent, our neighbor needs most

3 – we will propose non-gospel solutions to gospel-related problems

Now here’s a mental spiral I want you to emerge from: “It’s been a while since I’ve experienced the power of the gospel, so I’m going to wait till I ‘feel it’ before I speak up,...we all agree this isn’t logical thinking,... “yes, Lord, I know I should, I know you’ll be with me, I know you can save people & use a sinner like me, but I’m going to wait for a little something extra to get me going,...your comfort & call to ME are not sufficient.”

Here’s what you’ll find, one of the best ways to escape this spiral is to speak **up & out** in faith, to test & see if the gospel isn’t powerful for salvation. Test and see if the joy you are waiting around for isn’t at the *end* of sharing Jesus with somebody.

[hear I’m not talking about just letting someone know you go to church,...or you read the Bible, or you are a Christian,...I’m talking about sharing the gospel]

What is the gospel?

Romans 1:16-17 ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it [that is, in the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

[ok, so it has something to do with God’s righteousness & my righteousness & faith]

Romans 3:20-26 ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it- ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

[that is to say the righteousness & perfection of God is available to you through faith in Christ,...]

For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified [that is forgiven of sin & declared righteous] by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation [atoning-eternally-wrath-removing sacrifice] by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over

former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Let me be really basic here. We have this thing Paul calls the gospel which consists of bad news & good news

Bad News (in Paul's language)

1. sin & law
 - a. universality of sin = Rom 3:10-12, 3:23
 - b. demands of the law = Mt. 5:48
 - c. consequences of sin / law-breaking = Rom 6:23

Good News

2. justification & righteousness
 - a. needed but impossible by "law" & in "sin"
 - b. a free gift because of Christ's atonement for sin = 2 Cor. 5:21, & 3:25 "propitiation"
3. grace & faith
 - a. a free gift apprehended by faith in Jesus Christ = **Philippians 3:8-9** in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith-, Eph 2,

What are the necessary components of the gospel, Of "Jesus Christ and him crucified"?

Sin & Savior "Jesus came to save sinners"
Slavery & Freedom

What's the essence of the person & work of Jesus?

Substitution – 2 Cor. 5:21

[any ???s about the gospel as being powerful unto salvation?]

What about testimonies, where do they fit in?

The model of witness most often in the NT is of Paul, Philip, Peter, leading people to Christ by speaking Biblical truth in love to them

Paul only shares his testimony a few times in the whole Bible [only when it's needed & usually when forced into it], whereas over and over and over and over again in and out of the synagogues he is leading people to Christ by proclaiming the comfort & call of Christ in the Scriptures.

EE will be offered here, and we will use it. Because we need to be able to talk about Jesus, and present the gospel clearly to one another. There *is* value in boiling down what God has done in your life to 3 minutes,...but dear friends *God's* word is powerful in a way that our words are not.

A well-crafted testimony will do a few things – encourage vulnerability, demonstrate the power of the gospel, give the glory to Christ. But by and large the model of the NT is communicating this [God’s word] to lead people to Christ.

[??s]

Let’s move on to discuss the gospel as being powerful unto changed lives

This goes back to my observation that without understanding this we give – “non-gospel solutions to gospel-related problems.” Let me throw out some hypotheticals & I want you to tell me how the gospel relates to these situations:

- Marriage Teetering on Divorce
- Financial Mismanagement
- Exasperated Parent / Disobedient Child
- Bitterness & Grudge-bearing older & younger couple

You love em, you get to know em, you prepare to speak truth in love,...but Tripp reminds us to examine our hearts, & examine our goals.

Examine our hearts & goals to make sure they are in-line with God’s plan for this person,...and for us to come along side what the Spirit is doing.

Love-Know-Speak, being Christ to someone in the context of that meaningful relationship means having a goal in mind:

2 Corinthians 11:1-3 I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! ² I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ³ But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Paul is saying “I love you, I know you, I’ve layed out both the comfort & call of the gospel,...even the nitty-gritties of the call,...because I’m preparing you for marriage.

Tripp: “all of life is premarital counseling”

Most of our relationships, when they get to difficult things, are band-aid, current-event focused with the goal of “fixing” a situation or fixing a behavior & not applying the gospel to the heart & conscience level.

The person whose heart & life needs to change only sees the urgent, short-term. Or, as Tripp states it, “we tend to be shortsighted and self-absorbed. We forget that God’s primary goal is not changing our situations and relationships so that we can be

happy, but changing us through our situations and relationships so that we will be holy. We need people who love God and us enough to come alongside and help us deal with our spiritual myopia (241).”

If we don't have that pre-marital, this-is-going-somewhere, mindset. Then Tripp rightly says, we "...are tempted to think that change has taken place before it actually has. We confuse growth in knowledge and insight with genuine life change.”

That is to say that just because you speak truth to someone doesn't mean you can move on. Just because they acknowledge they need to change doesn't mean they know how.

Tripp observed in his 14 years of seminary teaching a phenomenal gap between confessional and functional theology. They fathomed the depths of Scripture but were not changed by it. They preached grace, but lived as legalists. They understood the sovereignty of God but were paralyzed by fear & anxiety.

“Do” the final step in love, know, speak,...is where we come alongside someone to help bridge the gap between insight and actual life-change. The gospel has been presented in it's fullness, comfort & call,...but how to apply it? Your child agrees that what they did was wrong,...but do they “get it” on a heart level? You know a lot,...but when does the knowledge take effect?

[prob with the modern “accountability group”] A friend of mine, high-schooler, is in a “porn-club” at his church. It's an accountability group for guys. You call each other when you are tempted & you pray. You confess your sins to one another. This is what men's ministry normally looks like. Let's be vulnerable, let's confess, let's do it again next week. But it falters & fails because no one experiences the power of the gospel in their lives because the focus isn't on Christ & gospel applied,...you want to change, but you don't experience lasting change because nobody knows where you are going.

Tripp says there are four ingredients that need to be added to the pot, stirred, blended, simmered & so he presents us with 4 objectives.

[tripp, pgs. 246-258]

1. Establish your personal ministry agenda
 - a. What does the Bible say about the information that has been gathered?
 - i. What has God taught, promised, commanded, warned, encouraged, and done that addresses this situation?”
 - b. What are God's goals for change for this person in this situation?
 - i. Keeps us from Jonah syndrome & agenda confusion
 - ii. Deals with what to “put off” and what to “put on”
 - c. What are some biblical methods for accomplishing God's goals of change?

Marriage – full of blame & anger

- a. Bible say?
 - a. Gen 2, Eph 5 marriage is a model of union with Christ, and a blessed thing
 - b. It is easier to see other's faults than our own Mt. 7:3-5
 - c. Christ forgives us, we should forgive one another Lk. 17:3-4
 - d. Christ has removed condemnation from us Rom 8:1
- b. God's goals?
 - a. Humility
 - b. Selfless-service & sacrifice
 - c. Self-disclosing, instead of self-protecting words
 - d. Quit being messiah's and point to Jesus

See fig. 13.1

- c. Biblical methods? [Joshua, not Tripp]
 - a. Means of grace, but creative
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2. Clarify Responsibility

- a. Some are irresponsible, don't do what God has called them to
 - i. Waste time and prayer for God to do something he has asked you to do, and then blame him for failure

Tripp, "many Christians also take the 'passive trust' approach to seeking guidance and reaction from the Lord. They think that knowing God's will comes as God reveals his secret plan to them; then they will know what to do. But guidance is really a matter of obedient, active trust...too many people have their "Christian divining rods" out in hopes of discovering the secret will of God. Meanwhile, the Bible in their hands is unopened – the thing God has said will be a 'lamp to their feet & light to their path"! 255

- b. Some are overly responsible, taking responsibility for things God has neither assigned nor equipped them to do
 - i. Means frustration, failure, discouragement, leave undone the things you are actually responsible for
- c. Confused over who does what

3. Instill identity in Christ

2 Peter 1:1-9 ^{ESV} **2 Peter 1:1** [[[Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: ² May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.]]]⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For

whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

4. Provide accountability
 - a. What kinds of ongoing help will this person need?
 - b. How often will I need to be in contact with him or her for change to continue?
 - c. Are there other resources in the body of Christ that would be helpful during this period? How can I connect this person to these resources?