

6 Week Summary (Gospel 101 – A Gospel-Powered Living)

1. Our Gospel Identity
 - Adoption (Orphans vs. Sons)
 - Passive Righteousness (the Great Exchange)
2. Getting Worse to Get Better
 - Sanctification by Faith – How do we change?
 - The Depths of our Sinful Heart – our inability to keep the law.
 - The Law and the Gospel
 - The Cross Chart (a deepening appreciation of the depths of our sin that is eclipsed only by a deepening love and dependence on the holiness of God.)
3. Lifestyle Repentance
 - Repentance vs. Resolution to change behavior.
 - What is the true nature of sin? A complex. “Orphan Living”, “unbelief in the promises of God”, idolatry (substitute gods and saviors)
 - What is true repentance?
4. Lifestyle Forgiveness
 - Grasping the depths of the heart of our forgiving King.
 - True Forgiveness – what it is and what it is not.
 - The Process of Forgiveness
5. Gospel-Centered Reconciliation and Conflict
 - Reconciling with an offender (story of Joseph).
 - Peacekeeping vs. Peacemaking
6. The Propulsion of Grace – What if grace wasn’t just for you?
 - The gospel is bigger than your personal improvement. The gospel is about the kingdom of God.
 - Grace empowers us to live a life radically aligned with the kingdom of God.
 - Personal Renewal leads to missions and missions leads to personal renewal.

Session #1 Our Identity in the Gospel

- ❖ Introduction. My experience with Sonship. After being a Christian for 25 years and even going to Seminary, I still did not understand the depths of the Gospel. The greatest news that I ever heard was that I was a greater sinner than I ever knew and that God’s grace was bigger than I could image.

The Fall of Adam and Eve.

Genesis 3:1-7

How does the Serpent convince Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit? What is the root cause of Adam and Eve’s sin?

- ❖ Satan convinces Adam and Eve that God is holding out on them, that he does not have their best interests in mind, he does not love them. When Adam and Eve bought the lie, they came to the horrible conclusion that they were alone in the world. **They believed themselves to be orphans and they started living life that way.** You can use examples of working with orphans in the adoption process.
- ❖ Personal examples of the orphan mentality in my own life.

Orphans or Children of God? (Sonship – pages 22-23)

Underline the descriptions in the left-hand column that best describe your faith struggles. For those weaknesses that you find, the right column can serve as personal goals for this course.

Orphans “I will not leave you as orphans ...” (John 14:18)	Children of God “But he has given us the Spirit of Sonship and by him we cry ‘Abba, Father!’” (Romans 8:15)
Feel alone, lacking a vital connection with God. Full of self-concern.	You have a growing assurance that “God is really my loving heavenly Father.”
Anxious over felt needs: relationships, money, health. “I’m all alone and nobody cares. I’m not a happy camper.”	Trusts the Father and has a growing confidence in his loving care. Is being freed up from worry.
Lives on a succeed/fail basis. Needs to “look good” and “be right.” Is performance oriented.	Learning to live in daily, conscious, partnership with God. Is not fearful.
Feel condemned, guilty, and unworthy before God and others.	Feels loved, forgiven, and totally accepted because Christ’s merit really clothes you.
Have little faith, lots of fear, lots of faith in yourself: “I’ve got to fix it.”	Has a daily <i>working trust</i> in God’s sovereign plan for your life as loving, wise and best. Believes God is good.
Labors under a sense of unlimited obligation. Tries too hard to please. Burns out.	Prayer is the first resort: “I’m going to ask my Daddy first.” Cries “Abba, Father!”
Rebellious. Resists authority. Heart is hard. Is not easily teachable.	Has strength to be submissive. Has a soft (broken and contrite) heart. You are teachable.
Defensive. Can’t listen well. Bristles at the charge of being self-righteous (thus proving the point).	Open to criticism since you <i>consciously</i> stand in <i>Christ’s</i> perfection, not your own. Is able to examine your unbelief.
Needs to be right, safe, secure. Unwilling to fail. Unable to tolerate criticism. Can only “handle” praise.	Able to take risks and even fail, since your righteousness is in Christ. Needs no “record” to boast in, protect, or defend.
Excessively self-confident or self-loathing. Discouraged, defeated. Lacks spiritual power.	Confident in Christ and encouraged because of the Holy Spirit’s work in you.
Tends toward an “I can do it myself!” attitude. Is strong-willed, driven.	“I can do all things through <i>Christ</i> who gives me strength!
Unbelieving effort. Rely on your abilities to get by in life.	You trust less in self and more in the Holy Spirit – a daily,

	conscious, reliance.
Tend to be ungrateful. Is complaining, bitter. Has a critical spirit. Tear down others.	You rely on the Holy Spirit to guide the tongue. Praises, edifies, gives thanks, encourages.
Tend to point out what is wrong. Is often dissatisfied about something.	Not blind to wrong, but you choose instead to focus on what is good and lovely.
Gossip (confess <i>other people's</i> sins). Need to criticize others to feel right. Has the "gift of discernment."	I am able to freely confess my own faults to others. I am eager to grow.
Tend to compare themselves with others – leading either to pride or depression.	Stand confidently in Christ. Your self-worth comes from Jesus' righteousness, not your own.
Feel powerless to defeat the flesh. Have no heart-victory over pet sins, yet have lost your sense of being a "big sinner."	As you rest in Christ, you see more and more victory over the flesh. You see yourself as a "big sinner."
Relatively prayerless. Prayer is a last resort. Pray sometimes in public, seldom in private.	Prayer is a vital part of the day, not confined to a quiet-time. You love to talk to the Father.
The Bible's promises of spiritual power and joy mocks you. "What has happened to all your joy?"	God's promises of power and joy are beginning to describe you.
Boast. Point out your own accomplishments for fear that someone might overlook them.	Find that Jesus is more and more the subject of your conversation. You boast in your weaknesses.
Concerned about building a record of deeds that needs noticing and defending.	Christ's righteousness is your "record" so you stand complete in him.
Wish people would see things your way. Need to be in <i>control</i> of situations and other people.	Becoming Christ controlled. Love others in the power of the Spirit, not in the strength of your sinful nature.
Looks for satisfaction in positions, possessions or pacifies (idols). Something other than Jesus makes you feel worthy, worthwhile or justified.	Christ is your meat and drink. God truly satisfies your soul. "And having him, I desire nothing on earth."
Lacks passion to share the gospel, since your Christian life is not really good news. Tends to be motivated by obligation or duty, not love.	You have a desire to see the lost come to know Jesus the way you do. You share the gospel, even when you don't have to.

The Difference Adoption Makes.

Galatians 4:3-7

What does God promise us in these verses?

How would your life change if you actually believed these promises? Examples?

How do these promises become real to us according to Paul?

- ❖ "If the Fall occurred through the embracing of lies, the recovery process of salvation must center on faith in truth, reversing this condition." (Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 90).
- ❖ The truth that God has adopted us sons and daughters undermines the lie that Satan used to entice us to sin.
- ❖ Story of the woman with 9 adopted children. When her newly adopted Son began to act up, he would scream, "you are not my real mother." She would go to her desk and find his adoption certificate and wave it in front of his face and declare – do you see this piece of paper, it tells me that you are my Son. You belong to me. You aren't going anywhere! The Holy Spirit testifies with our Spirit that we are children of God.
- ❖ If you believed that God was your good Father would you be stingy? Would you be fearful? Controlling?

Adam and Eve's Relationship.

Genesis 3:8-13

What does Adam do when God questions him? Why does he do it?

How do you think this affected their relationship going forward?

What would Adam have had to believe for him to handle his failure differently?

- ❖ Adam throws Eve under the bus, because in that moment he understands that to be wrong means he is going to die (Genesis 2:17). He then tries to shift the blame to Eve and actually God himself.
- ❖ Adam who was created to teach and protect Eve, attempts to sacrifice his wife in order to save himself. This seriously undermines their marriage and breaks the perfect trust that they had previously trusted. Without God's protection and security, Adam ceases to love his wife and for the first time he uses her.
- ❖ Adam should have come clean and admitted his failure, but as far he knows there is no forgiveness available to him.

Because I have to be right ...

- I don't listen (Why listen when I already have the answer?)
- I complain. (Other people have it wrong; God is wrong. I know what is best and what is right.)
- I defend myself. (Don't you attack my reputation!)
- I attack and accuse. (I am right by being better than you.)
- I am harsh with others. (There's nothing wrong with me, there's something wrong with them.)
- I am critical. (God grades on a curve and I am ahead of the curve.)
- I gossip. (I am right because you are wrong.)

Which do you see in Adam? Which do you see in yourself?

- ❖ Add a personal example of having to be right.
- ❖ This is not a small thing. Hitler rode to power because he convinced the Germans that their national troubles were not their fault, it was the fault of the Jews. The same impulse that caused Adam to betray his wife, pushed the highly educated German society to slaughter 6 million Jews.

The Great Exchange.

Philippians 3:4-9. 2 Corinthians 5:21.

What two kinds of righteousness (ways of being right) does Paul describe?

Why is the first kind of righteousness inadequate?

How do we get the second kind of righteousness?

How would our lives change if we actually believe this truth?

- ❖ Active righteousness is what you do. It is your performance, your record. We need active righteousness to love people properly, but the problem is that our active righteousness is never enough. From Adam's perspective we are still dead.
- ❖ Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags [the language has really been cleaned up]; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.
- ❖ Romans 3:20-21 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. 21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.
- ❖ The Great Exchange is this – Jesus became our sin, he took on our sin and he was punished at the cross as if he had committed our sin. But there is another side of this deal. When we belong to Christ, we receive his righteousness, his record and we are blessed Sons and Daughters of God on the **basis of Christ's record.**
- ❖ Philippians 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but **that which is through faith in Christ-the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.**

“It is like this: the earth does not produce rain, nor is it able by its own power or work to get it. The earth simply receives it as a gift of God from above. It is the same with “passive” righteousness. It is given to us by God without our deserving or working for it.” (Martin Luther)

- ❖ Close with a small group discussion.
 - How did today’s session challenge your understanding of the gospel? Of God?
 - What parts of the gospel do you struggle to believe?
 - Group Prayer.

Homework.

The Tongue Assignment

For one week, do not:

- Gossip
- Complain
- Criticize
- Blameshift (or make excuses)
- Defend Yourself
- Boast
- Deceive others

Find a prayer partner to pray for your personal goals for this small group.

Pray Psalm 139:23-24 throughout the week.

Psalms 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Session #2 – Getting Worse to Get Better

Large Group Discussion: The Tongue Assignment

So how did the tongue assignment go? Did anyone keep it? What made it so difficult? What do our tongues show us about our hearts?

- ❖ I noticed that I wanted to say a lot of things this week, but I bit my tongue because I knew that my kids were on the lookout. I even schemed how can I say what I want to say subtly enough so that I can avoid the charge of being critical. One example: Dakodah asked me to go sledding and I agreed. Dakodah put on a green hat, a pink coat, and purple snow pants with a huge rip in the knees. You know what I was thinking, I can't let her go out like that, it's going to reflect badly. I ask Dakodah to go get changed. Eileen protested that it would take too much time. Dakodah and I get into the car and in an exasperated voice I saw, "Dakodah why couldn't you put on the black snow suit?" She didn't catch me, I was home free.
- ❖ Ask the participants why they slipped up. Relate their failures back to the source of either "feeling like an orphan" or "not believing that you have the righteousness of Christ." Unbelief and orphan-like fear are the root causes of our sin.

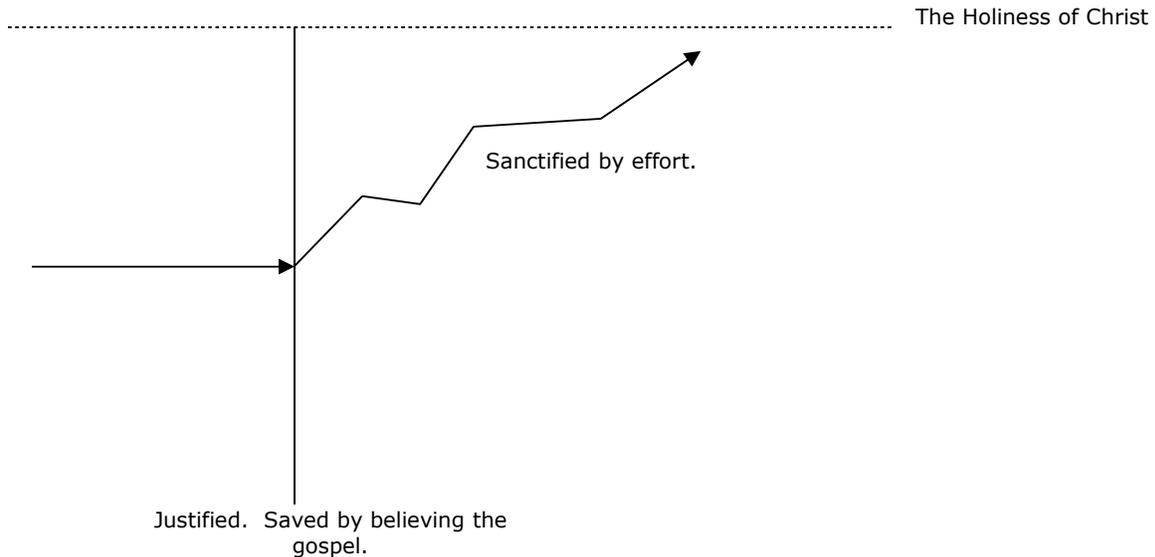
[Film Clip: "Bilbo sees the ring" from *The Fellowship of the Ring*]

- ❖ What we normally call sin are really symptoms of a diseased and sinful heart. Our "sins" are those times when our unbelieving heart erupts or is teased to the surface.
- ❖ Matthew 15:17-20 "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? 18 But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. 20 These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'"
- ❖ [Sin] is something much more akin to the psychological term *complex*: an organic network of compulsive attitudes, beliefs and behavior deeply rooted in our alienation from God ... Sinful thoughts, words and deeds flow forth from this darkened heart automatically and compulsively, as water from a polluted stream. (Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 88.)
- ❖ It is one thing to manage our behavior (and even that is really hard from the tongue assignment) it is another thing to change the motivation of your heart. You can bite your tongue, but you can't change your heart with effort alone.

The question is how do we change? To tackle this question, let's talk about two important theological terms.

- ❖ Justification is the one time act of God where he forgives your sin and declares you to be innocent and righteous in his sight.
- ❖ Sanctification is the process where we progressively reflect more and more the character and love of Jesus.
- ❖ Justification is past tense – "I was saved." Sanctification is present tense – "I am being saved."
- ❖ From the hymn "Rock of Ages": Be of sin the double cure. Cleanse me from its guilt [justification] and its power [sanctification].

A faulty understanding of how we change.



Why doesn't this work? What are the pitfalls?

- ❖ Romans 7:7-8 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.

Why do you think Paul chose the 10th Commandment to illustrate his point?

- ❖ Do not covet is completely internal. In the mind.
- ❖ The law actually incites us to sin. The more we try not to covet, the more we covet. The law is to show us where we fail, but it lacks the power to change us.

What does your testimony depend on in this scheme?

- ❖ You'd have to talk about what you used to be, and how much better you are now. This is fine, but what happens when you fail? What happened to me is that I had to fake it. I had to hide so that the people would not find out that I wasn't as good as my image.
- ❖ Galatians 3:2-3 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

So how do we change, how do we become more like Christ if it is impossible to attain this goal by human effort?

Small Group Discussion

Snapshots from the Life of Paul

Paul as a young man before he encounters Christ.

Philippians 3:4-6 If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

What is Paul's assessment of himself?

What does he think of Christ?

Paul in the middle of his life as an Apostle.

1 Corinthians 15:9-10 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

What is Paul's view of himself at this point in his life?

What does he think of Christ (God)?

Paul close to the end of his life.

1 Timothy 1:15-16 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-of whom I am the worst. 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

How does Paul see himself at the end of his life?

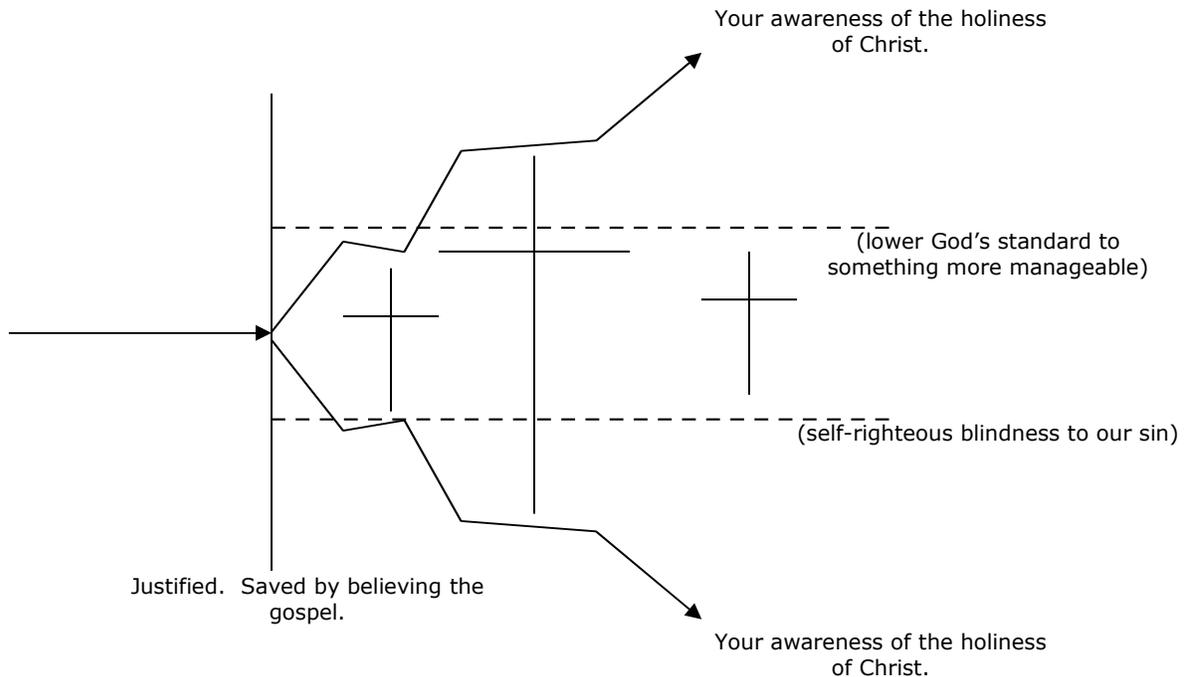
What does he think of Christ?

As Paul grows in his relationship with Christ, how does his view of himself change? How does his view of Christ change?

- ❖ Paul goes from legalistic perfection to the worst of sinners.
- ❖ Paul goes from hating Christ to loving a Christ who possesses unlimited patience.

The Cross Chart.

- ❖ Here is where I found the freedom to be honest, release from my pressure to perform and I learned that I needed to focus more on Christ and less on myself.



- ❖ As with Paul, after conversion our awareness of our sin deepens, but at the same time our understanding of the holiness of Christ increases. As the gap between our sinfulness and the holiness of Christ, we will need a bigger and bigger gospel in order to bridge the gap. We become more like Christ as we become more dependent on him.
- ❖ We try to circumvent this process in one of two ways – which reduces the value of the cross and the size of our gospel:
 - We reduce God's law to something more manageable than Love God with all your heart, mind and soul and love your neighbor as yourself. We invent external codes like no R rated movies, no dancing, no cursing ...
 - We live in self-righteous blindness to our sin. We are critical of others. We are defensive, we rationalize our own sin. We are incredibly good at this. One good example is the story of when Nathan the Prophet confronts David after the sin of Bathsheba. The story is so obviously about David, but he is too blind to see it.

What does a testimony look like with this understanding of sanctification (growing to become like Christ)?

- ❖ Here is why I need a large gospel and a large Christ today.
- ❖ You don't have to fake it any more, you get to talk about the 'unlimited patience' of Christ as Paul does in 1 Timothy 1:15-16

What are the pitfalls to this approach in growing in Christ?

- ❖ The biggest one is despairing over your sin that you become self-focused and you fail to do the most important part which is to look to Christ. Remember his holiness is given to you as a gift and you are blessed by God as if you lived his life. Remember as God reveals your sin, his adoption of you can never be revoked. Cheer up you are a worse sinner than you thought, but God's grace is big enough to cover all your sin.

The Story of Sinful Woman and Simon the Pharisee.

Luke 7:36-47 Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38 and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is-that she is a sinner."

40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

41 "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 **Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven-for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.**"

The heart of God's law is boiled down to two simple commands. Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. Which person in the story loved God more? What does Jesus say is the key to loving him?

- ❖ The irony is the more we are aware that we break God's law, the more we appreciate his forgiveness. The more we appreciate his forgiveness, the more we love him. The more we love him, the more like Christ we become. The irony is that we have to become worse to become better, that is how we grow in Christ.

Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells,
And the deeper the wells the brighter thy stars shine;
Let me find thy light in my darkness,
Thy life in my death,
Thy joy in my sorrow,
Thy grace in my sin,
Thy riches in my poverty
Thy glory in my valley. (The Valley of Vision – Puritan Prayer)

Small Group Discussion:

- What is one thing that struck you today about the gospel?
- How can we pray for each other?
- Group Prayer.

Homework:

Journal the following: Go back over your failures in the tongue assignment and journal what they reveal about your heart. Would you need to believe in order to change?

Ask someone who is close to you, “what is one thing you would change about me?”

Session #3 – A Lifestyle of Repentance

Large Group Introduction

Homework review: *How did it go when you asked a significant person what is one thing you would change about me? Were you surprised? How did you react?*

Write out a definition of repentance.

Small Group Discussion

Read. Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75.

How do you think Jesus wanted his disciples to respond to his prediction?

Why did Peter's resolution to never to fall away, falls apart?

What is the root cause of his failure?

Large Group Review: Why resolutions don't work

- ❖ Jesus wanted Peter not to resolve to change his behavior, but to be broken by what Jesus saw in him. That is the beginning of repentance, not a resolution to becoming better.
- ❖ Why did a servant girl bring down Peter? He was trying to protect his precious reputation (another way of saying righteousness or simply being right.)
 - Peter didn't want to be associated with a "loser" or with a criminal.
 - He is all about self-preservation and when push comes to shove he is ready to sell out one of his closest friends.

Repentance = Repentant Faith.

What do these passages tell us about the relationship between repentance and faith?

The opening words of Jesus' ministry.

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. **Repent and believe** the good news!"

Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

In the apostles

Acts 3:19 **Repent**, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

Acts 16:31 They replied, "**Believe** in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved-you and your household."

- ❖ In the Apostles and with Jesus you get the picture that faith and repentance are interchangeable. You can't have true faith without true repentance and you can't have true repentance without true faith.
- ❖ To be saved we must have repentant faith.

- ❖ When we became a Christian what did we do? We repented and believed the gospel. But with the teaching of Jesus (the Lord's prayer) it becomes clear that repentance is not a one-time thing, but a lifelong, continual process of repentance and faith.



Small Group Discussion: What does it mean to repent?

Read Luke 15:11-32.

Using the story of the prodigal son, come up with a definition of repentance.

Large Group Definitions of Repentance.

Review the new definitions of repentance.

- ❖ Repentance is greater than a decision to change behavior and then doing it. It is a change of the direction of our heart brought about by a broken, humble return to our God as he works in us. (Stu Batstone, Sonship 2005)
- ❖ Repentance always needs to be extended further. Repentance is turning from as much as you know of your sin to give as much as you know of yourself to as much as you know of your God. As your knowledge grows through these three points, our practice of repentance must be enlarged. (JI Packer)

Repentance is turning from as much as you know about your sin ...

- ❖ *Unbelief* – something about God and the gospel that I don't believe. (People pleasing example in Seminary and the fact that my real sin was that I did not believe that Christ's sacrifice was not enough. What an insult to Christ!)

Mark 9:24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

- ❖ *Idolatry* – we turn to something other than God to give us an identity and security. It is when a good thing becomes our only thing "Tim Keller." Repentance is owning up to our unbelief and returning to God asking for the faith to believe and the faith to walk in obedience. Making things other than Jesus to be our own personal savior.

Jeremiah 2:13 "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

- ❖ Idolatry is also compared to adultery.

Hosea 2:5 Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.'

... to give as much as you of your yourself ...

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (from New International Version)

... to as much as you know of your God.

Luke 15:20 "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him

- ❖ Repentance is not modifying behavior it is the breaking and transforming of our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit.

How do our hearts become repentant?

- ❖ Dan Allender (Wounded Heart) Sin needs to be understood for what it reveals rather than for what we are to stop. If your attitude is to stop it, that is not enough. If you try to resolve your sin you have not defined it accurately. We misrepresent when we think about it simply as a category of immorality. We trivialize sin when we try to explain it ... Repentance is not a decision of the will to do the right thing. It's an internal shift in our perceived source of life. **Ultimately repentance is a humble, broken return to God, but there is a catch ... we are utterly unable to do it.** Repentance is not something we decide to do and then do it, it is something that God works in us. Our part is to get ourselves ready for God to work repentance within us. Before God can turn us, we need to become deeply dissatisfied with the way things are now. That's when we become hungry for change and hopeful that change is possible. [Once we've been caught it is pointless to just change, but to simply leave the ball in God's court is to avoid our responsibility.] **Our job is to ask and keep asking this question. What is blocking me from the desperate hunger to change and the excited hope that it can happen?**

Asking for Insight not Forgiveness.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! **Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law.** For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."

- ❖ Let's go back to this idea of sin *reveals* rather than something we are trying to *stop*.

[Give an example of "asking for forgiveness of my wife." Make sure to include minimizing (owning only the outward behavior – ignore the heart) and then ask for forgiveness and then get angry when the person doesn't offer it right away.

Here are some examples:

(If you have sinned against someone)

Can we talk about how my sin affected you?

(When someone asks for forgiveness.)

Can you tell me what sin you'd like me to forgive?

Large Group Discussion: Examples of false repentance

Which of these most apply to you? Do you agree that these are all examples of false repentance? Do you question some of them? Why?

Examples of False Repentance. (Sonship, 113)

- Changing your outward behavior
 - Groveling
 - Beating yourself up
 - Having a brilliant observation or insight about yourself or your sins
 - Making promises or resolutions
 - Engaging in self-pity
 - Offering a sacrifice.
- ❖ **These are all examples of trying to cover ourselves** (think about the Garden of Eden story – “sewing fig leaves for ourselves”. “Something to stop rather than something that can reveal something about our hearts.” Think back to Peter’s story – was Jesus trying to get Peter to resolutely stop denying him, or was Jesus’ point to reveal Peter’s heart to him and bring him to a place of repentance.

The Blessings of Repentance

Isaiah 30:15 This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says:

"In **repentance and rest is your salvation**, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.

From the Prodigal Son ... when you come home there is a party.

[Personal story of my own repentance of the sin of pornography. The biggest lie was this. You must keep this secret because if it is known it is over for you. But keeping the sin secret meant that the sin became more powerful. When I repented publicly the power of the sin was broken (or significantly weakened) and to my shock I experienced the joy of receiving forgiveness from the community. Rather than it being the end of me, it was my liberation day!

Small Groups Discussion:

How did your understanding of repentance change tonight?

Where do you need God to do a work of repentance in your life?

Pray for each other.

Homework: Continue to pray Psalm 139:23-24. Journal about the sins that God has revealed in your heart recently. Ask these two questions: What is blocking me from the desperate hunger to change and the excited hope that it can happen? [*Conformed to his Image has a good inventory to help uncover sin. Also the nature of an idol – anything that replaces God as ‘lord and savior’. Luther – sin is unbelief.*

Session #4 – A Lifestyle of Forgiveness

Introduction: Peter's question to Jesus what are the limits of forgiveness?

Centrality of forgiveness to the gospel.

Luke 11:4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."

Matthew 18:21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

Peter is looking for a law of forgiveness and he is being quite generous. The rabbis of that day thought the three should be the limit and beyond that was "enabling". Peter does that and adds one to it. But Jesus blows Peter's law keeping out of the water. "I tell you 70 times 7." How is it possible to forgive? Jesus this story which I would like you to discuss within your groups.

Small Group discussion

The Story of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-ff)

- What does this story tell us about the heart of God?
- What does this story tell us about our own hearts?
- What does this story teach us about forgiveness?

Include these facts with the discussion:

100 denarii = 100 days wages (figure it out based on your income).

10,000 talents = The largest number and the largest unit of measure. If we had to compare it something it could be the total revenue of the Roman Empire for one year.

Large Group Discussion - Review

Who is the king and what is he like?

Who is the unmerciful servant? Peter. Us.

What does this story teach us about forgiveness?

What Forgiveness is and what it is not.

Forgiveness is not forgetting what happened. Forgiveness is not minimizing the pain.

What would it have cost the servant to forgive the debt owed him? How easy would be for you to forgive a debt that size?

What did it cost the king to forgive the servant in the story? 10,000 talents.

What did it cost our King to forgive us?

What are we doing in communion?

- ❖ Luke 22:19 Do this in remembrance of me. We remember the tragedy of the Lord's death and our glorious salvation. Each Sunday we remember with God the price he paid for our forgiveness. God does not forget the past but he redeems it.
- ❖ "We either make forgiveness too easy by forgiving big things too early and holding on to small things way too long." Ruth Ann Batstone

- ❖ Caveat: There are *small things* that we need to overlook ... (these are the small things we hold on to for too long)
1 Peter 4:8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Forgiveness costs us something. Forgiveness means counting the cost and relinquishing of your rights to make the person pay.

- ❖ "Forgiveness is a **costly gift** that **cancel a debt** owed in order to **give a taste** of the **character of God.**" Dan Allender
- ❖ What is the nature of the debt owed? "Emotional pain is the currency of forgiveness." Tim Keller. When someone hurts us there is a debt of emotional pain that must be paid. We will either extract it from the person who harmed it or we will pay for it ourselves.

Forgiveness does not mean a lack of anger for sin

- ❖ I've learned that there are times when not getting angry is inappropriate. Can you think of examples from Jesus where he got angry, even though he is the definition of forgiveness? Jesus cleanses the temple. (John 2:12-ff) It is not putting a "happy face" on evil and saying pious things like "it will all turn out good in the end."

Forgiveness does not require repentance by the offender, but repentance is not synonymous with reconciliation.

- ❖ Forgiveness is one sided. It is a unilateral decision to surrender your right for vengeance.

Luke 23:34-36 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One."
36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar
- ❖ Forgiveness is an offer for reconciliation (it is not reconciliation itself). While forgiveness is one-sided, reconciliation requires repentance on both sides. (We will talk more about this later.)

1 Samuel 15:35 Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD was grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel.

Can you think of other examples where forgiveness should not include reconciliation? Think about abuse.

Forgiveness is not a one-time process.

God created us with memories and there will be times when something will trigger a painful memory and in that moment we will be forced to forgive that person again. In that moment you will absorb the debt of emotional pain and relinquish your right to make the person pay.

It is not possible to forgive yourself. Forgiveness must be received.

The whole point of forgiveness is that you owe a debt that you cannot pay yourself. Forgiveness can only be received from the one whom you offended and ultimately forgiveness is received from the Father.

The Process of Forgiveness.

Forgiveness is fundamentally derivative.

- ❖ There is a deep connection between our receiving God's forgiveness and our giving forgiveness to others.

At the end of the story of the unmerciful servant there is this warning:

Matthew 18:35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Or from Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer

Luke 11:4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."

- ❖ I believe that the only way it is possible to forgive someone is to experience the reality of Christ's forgiveness of you. If you can't forgive, you haven't truly experienced forgiveness. We are not natural lovers and forgivers. We can only give away what we have received.

Colossians 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

What is the primary way that we receive the love and forgiveness of God? Through repentance, continual repentance.

Repentance. The first step towards forgiveness is to recognize your own sinfulness and identify with the one who has harmed you. And this sounds outrageous.

- ❖ "Forgiveness flounders when I exclude my enemy from the community of humanity and exclude myself from the community of sinners."
(Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*)

What did the unmerciful servant fail to grasp when he choked the servant that owed him the smaller but significant debt?

The enormity of the debt he owed God. To see that he like his enemy is a debtor. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

- ❖ Forgiveness begins with self-examination and deep repentance. It is going to the terrible place of asking how am I like my enemy? How do I do the same things? In the end we must realize that we are both victims (community of humanity) and victimizers (community of sinners.) This is not mean that we were culpable in the situation (for example: a child is not culpable for sexual abuse), but it does mean that we are still tainted by sin. How is the root of my sin the same as the one who has sinned against me? An abuser uses people to feed his own ache. As a pastor I have manipulated people to help heal my own ache.
- ❖ But as we acknowledge the debt we owe, we revel in the fact that our heavenly father has forgiveness us at great cost to himself. We are free and now we extend that freedom to others.

Worship – Faith.

- ❖ **God forgiveness and grace.** The enormity of God’s debt that he has forgiven us.
- ❖ **God’s justice.** God is a perfect God of justice. He will ensure that every sin is fully paid for to the fullest extent of the law. Either Christ will bear that sin or the unrepentant person will pay it for eternity.

1 Peter 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

- ❖ **God’s sovereign power.** The sovereignty of God is foundation of Joseph’s forgiveness and reconciliation with his brothers.

Genesis 50:20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

We must count the cost. We must grieve what was lost and by faith surrender our right to collect.

- ❖ True forgiveness can never say “it was nothing”, “they didn’t mean it” or “they are really a nice person.” This is minimizing. This is trying to make forgiveness manageable so we can do it on our own strength. It is about fully grieving what was lost.
- ❖ “The cost of forgiveness involves grief and loss. The grief can be so deep we don’t know if we can come out of it.”
- ❖ Sometimes “quick forgiveness” is an attempt to paper over a loss and move on. The problem is that the bitterness will still remain.

What did forgiveness cost the king?

How does God remember that cost even today?

- ❖ We must get to the point where we cry out to God and say, “I can’t release this, you must do a work in my heart to make forgiveness possible.

We work towards reconciliation.

- ❖ We must remember that reconciliation is only possible if God does a work of repentance in the heart of the offender. Then and only then is repentance possible. It may be that all you can do is pray for the person’s repentance. In the meantime you may have to “mourn” the loss of that person (as Samuel did Saul) until God works in their heart.

Identifying someone that you have not yet forgiven.

(by Ruth Ann Batstone)

- Is there someone you feel cold towards?
- Is there someone that you are habitually demanding or controlling of them?
- Is there someone you are actively trying to harm?
- Is there someone you are trying to ignore?
- Is there someone you gossip about?
- Is there someone that you root for them to fail?

Small Group Discussion

- How has God challenged you in the area of forgiveness?
- How have you experienced forgiveness (either giving or receiving) in your life? What effect did it have on your life?
- How would you like your group to pray for you this week in the area of forgiveness?

Homework.

Journal the following (from Ruth Ann Batstone).

1. Who is somebody that you need to forgive?
2. Pray and ask God to show you the enormity of his forgiveness and the unforgiveness of your own heart. Ask yourself: What has happened in the last 24 hours of my life that is part of my debt that Jesus paid?
3. How are you like the person you need to forgive?
4. How have you attempted to choke this person?
5. How might you be denying and minimizing the impact of the wrong that was done to you?
6. What do you need from God in the moment that you remember?
7. What will it look like to forgive this person? What will it feel like? How will you change? Where do you need the power of the Holy Spirit?
8. What must happen for reconciliation to occur? If protection is an issue ... what steps may you need to protect yourself from further harm?

Session #5 Conflict and Reconciliation

Introduction: Introduce the story of Joseph to set the context for the Bible Reading in the Small Group.

Small Group Discussion: Read Genesis 42-45 together as a group and answer the following questions:

- How do you feel about the way Joseph treated his brothers? Was he unforgiving?
- Why do you think Joseph took so long to reveal his true identity to his brothers? Should he have waited? Should he have revealed himself right away without putting his brothers through the wringer?
- Why do you think Joseph chose the particular moment that he did (Genesis 45:1-ff) to reveal himself to his brothers?

Large Group Discussion:

Was Joseph unforgiving? Why or why not?

- ❖ If he was going to make his brothers pay – he would have thrown them in prison and that would have been the end of it. What was the weeping about?)
- ❖ Remember that forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same thing. Forgiveness is unilateral, “I choose to relinquish my rights to vengeance. I cancel the debt whether or not the other person repents.” But forgiveness is an offer of reconciliation (the debt has been paid), but reconciliation requires repentance on the part of the offender.

What happened in the lives of his brothers because he waited?

- ❖ There is a great work of repentance in the heart of Judah. He was the one who engineered Joseph’s betrayal, but when he is put in the same position by Joseph his heart breaks and he offers himself in the place of his brother Benjamin. Judah was no longer the same man.

What would have happened if Joseph had reconciled with his brothers too quickly?

- ❖ Joseph may have short-circuited the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of his brothers. You see the goal is not to get out of the pain as quickly as possible – that is an orphan way to live, but true love seeks the best for the other. True love for an enemy desires more than anything else to see Christ formed in the other person. This may mean that we hold off on reconciliation knowing that we may live the rest of our lives with a broken heart.
- ❖ “At first sight, the rough handling of Joseph of his brothers has the look of vengefulness, but nothing could be further from the truth. Behind the harsh pose there is deep, almost uncontrollable affection seen in Joseph’s continual running out of the room to weep. And after the ordeal is over there is nothing but overwhelming kindness and tenderness. Joseph’s enigmatic treatment of them was a kinder, more searching test. Just how well judged was his policy can be seen in the growth of new attitudes in the brothers **as the alternating sun and frost broke them open to God.**” (Derek Kidner’s Commentary on Genesis quoted by Tim Keller in his sermon on Joseph entitled “Discipline”)

If Joseph just threw them in the slammer would his brothers have changed?

- ❖ unforgiveness – all frost

If Joseph just said, ‘let bygones be bygones’, would they changed?

- ❖ Shallow forgiveness, premature reconciliation – all sun.

Give the group time now to give feedback before moving on.

Godly Conflict.

So far we have been talking about situations where there is a clear offender and a clear victim. This will happen to all of us and forgiveness and reconciliation are difficult roads to walk. But not all conflict is so one sided. Sometimes we will face conflict where there is no clear offender and no clear victim. Instead what we will have are two sinful people with sinful hearts aggravate the flesh in each other and cause conflict.

[Think of a recent personal example of what this looks like.]

The questions I would like us to explore are these: Is all conflict bad? If there is such a thing as godly conflict, what does it look like? What would gospel-centered conflict look like?

Small Group Discussion:

Discuss in your group the following:

- What kinds of issues do you tend to get into conflict with people over?
- What kinds of people do you have conflict with?
- How do you respond the other person when you are mad at them? (e.g. lose temper, silent treatment, etc.)
- When you are in conflict do you normally apologize first or does the other person?
- Is it more godly to give in and apologize or is it more godly to stick to your guns?

Large Group Discussion: Peacekeeping vs. Peacemaking

- ❖ Depending on your upbringing and your temperament you tend towards one of two pole:
 - The Retreater – A method of self-protection that avoids problems, denies them, enables, or “apologizes” (usually prematurely) just to make the problem go away. Conflict is always bad and is to be avoided at all costs.
 - The Subduer – This person tends to crush the other person through intimidation, control, manipulation and/or guilt.

The question is: How are retreaters and subduers similar to each other? Think about what is motivating both of them.

Hand out the following chart and go over it with the large group.

Aspect	Peacekeeping (Orphan Conflict)	Peacemaking (Adopted Son/Daughter Conflict)
Heart Foundation	Unbelief, self-righteousness	Repentant faith, forgiveness
Power Source	The sinful nature, fear	The Holy Spirit
Commitment	To avoid constructive conflict	To pursue constructive conflict
Direction	To bully, deny or avoid	To invite something far better
Feeling	Life is safe, less painful	Life is challenging, less certain
Goal	Self-protection, “peace”	God’s glory, other person’s good
Result	Alienation, broken relationships	Reconciliation, healed relationships

(Sonship Manual, 253)

- ❖ **Peacekeeping**, whether it is the subduer or the retreator version, is an orphan's attempt to protect himself or herself. It is a refusal to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a refusal to hope that God can transform me and the other person.

- ❖ **Peacemaking.**
 - *Constructive Conflict begins with self-examination.* You must first see yourself as the greater sinner, before you approach the other person.
Luke 6:41-42 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 42 How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.
 - *Flows out of a gospel-centered heart.* Your fear must be conquered before you can risk yourself to see Christ formed in yourself and in the other person.
Romans 8:15-16 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.
 - *Motivated by love for the other person.* Paul's letter the Galatians is one of his sharpest, most conflict-filled letters of all his letters. Yet notice how he feels about the church that he is in conflict with.
Galatians 4:19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,
 - *Done with a full awareness of the danger of falling into sin during the conflict.*
1 Timothy 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-of whom I am the worst.

Small Group Discussion

- How did our time together challenge some of your conceptions of godly conflict?
- In what ways is God convicting you in the areas of conflict and reconciliation?
- How can you be in prayer for each other as you struggle to apply the gospel to the conflicts in your life?
- Group Prayer.

Homework:

Journal about a current (or recent conflict in your life) using the following questions as a guide.

Constructive Conflict begins with Self-Examination

- Do you expect God to use other person to expose your own need for the gospel?
- Do you reject gossip and deal directly with the person involved?
- Are you listening well?
- Are you dealing with issues or personalities?
- Are you asking questions or accusing?
- Are you approachable and teachable?
- Are you committed to ongoing forgiveness during the course of your conversations?

Flows out of a gospel-centered heart

- Have you surrendered your desire to prove how right you are and how wrong the other person is?
- Are you demanding or do you look to the Holy Spirit to transform other people?

- Do you have a hopeful vision for what they can become?
- Do you desire God's glory to be seen in the lives of everyone involved in the conflict?

Motivated by love for the other person.

- Are you more interested in winning the argument or winning the person?
- Do you desire the other person's good?

With a full awareness of the danger of falling into sin during the conflict.

- In this particular conflict, what areas of sin are you vulnerable to?

Spend some time in prayer, confessing your sin in the conflict and asking God for the faith to trust him and to believe that reconciliation and transformation is possible.

Session #6 – God’s Grace is bigger than us.

Introduction: What if the gospel was bigger than ourselves?

Split the group into two groups, each will study one individuals experience with the kingdom of God. Each group will report their findings back to the larger group.

Small Group Discussion #1: Abraham

Read Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:6-9, 14.

- What did Abraham do to deserve the blessings of God?
- What larger purpose will Abraham’s blessing serve?

Read Genesis 12:10-20; 17:1-18.

- What makes Abraham an unlike candidate for the role that God has chosen for him?
- Why do you think God chose him?

Small Group Discussion #2: Paul

Read 2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6.

Remember that Paul is writing the church in Corinth, a church he has authority over and a church that supports his missionary efforts financially. With that in mind ...

- What is startling about the details of his life that Paul shares with the Corinthians?
- What is the task that God has given Paul?
- How does Paul feel about the task that God has given him ...
 - In chapter 2:12-17?
 - In chapter 3:1-6?
 - Why is there a change in perspective between chapter 2 and 3?

Abraham Discussion Debrief

- ❖ Abraham has done nothing to deserve God’s grace.
- ❖ God delights in using weak people to accomplish his purposes. It just so happens that Abraham is both a coward and he and his wife are childless well into their nineties.
 - **1 Corinthians 1:27-29** But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-and the things that are not-to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him.
 - “God has not changed your heart and spoken grace into your life to bear no fruit ... He will use you to do things you could never imagine.” (Josiah Bancroft, *The Sonship Course, “the Propulsion of Grace”*)
- ❖ That grace that Abraham has received from God serves a larger purposes than himself.
 - **Genesis 12:3** I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; *and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*”
 - **Galatians 3:8-9** The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” 9 So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

The Gospel is bigger than us

- ❖ God extends grace to Abraham, but that grace has a purpose larger than Abraham himself. God has a mission to bless the world through Abraham and his family. This is not only true for Abraham this is true for us ...
- ❖ **John 20:21-22** Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ The gospel is part of a larger story. It begins with a community, a family, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit who out of love for each other created the world and placed humanity at the pinnacle of creation. Why did God do it? Ever love and enjoy something so much that you might others to enjoy it and be blown away by it. That is why God created us. To bring glory to him and enjoy him forever. But you know the story, Adam and Eve rebelled, God's creation was broken, our connection to God was broken. So what did God do? The Trinity went on mission together. The Father sent the Son to earth to reconcile creation with himself. Jesus came with the power of the Holy Spirit. He lived a perfect life (overcoming temptation) and then he defeated sin and death opening the door to reconciliation with God. Before Jesus returned to his Father he invited us into this mission of reconciliation. He returned to the Father and he poured out his Spirit on his church, so that we might continue what Christ started. That mission we are called to is the called the good news of the kingdom. It is not just making me feel better about myself, it is about a kingdom of God. That was the core of Jesus' message.
- ❖ This is what the Gospel gives us!
 - A New Status (forgiven, perfect, right, chosen, son/daughter, heir)
 - A New Nature (regeneration (born again of the Holy Spirit)
 - A New Kingdom and a New Mission to extend the reign of Jesus Christ on earth by making new followers of Jesus.
- ❖ God's grace has a higher purpose. It helps us overcome our issues with fear, guilt, identity and forgiveness **so that we can get out of ourselves and start living for others and for God's kingdom.**
- ❖ "The true gospel is kingdom centered and the ironic thing is that if we center ourselves on God's mission and kingdom and less on our own fulfillment, we will be more fulfilled." (Josiah Bancroft, *The Sonship Course, "the Propulsion of Grace"*)
- ❖ "A man will kill himself if he finds no purpose for his life even though he is surrounded by an abundance of bread." (Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*)
- ❖ Matthew 6:31-33 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

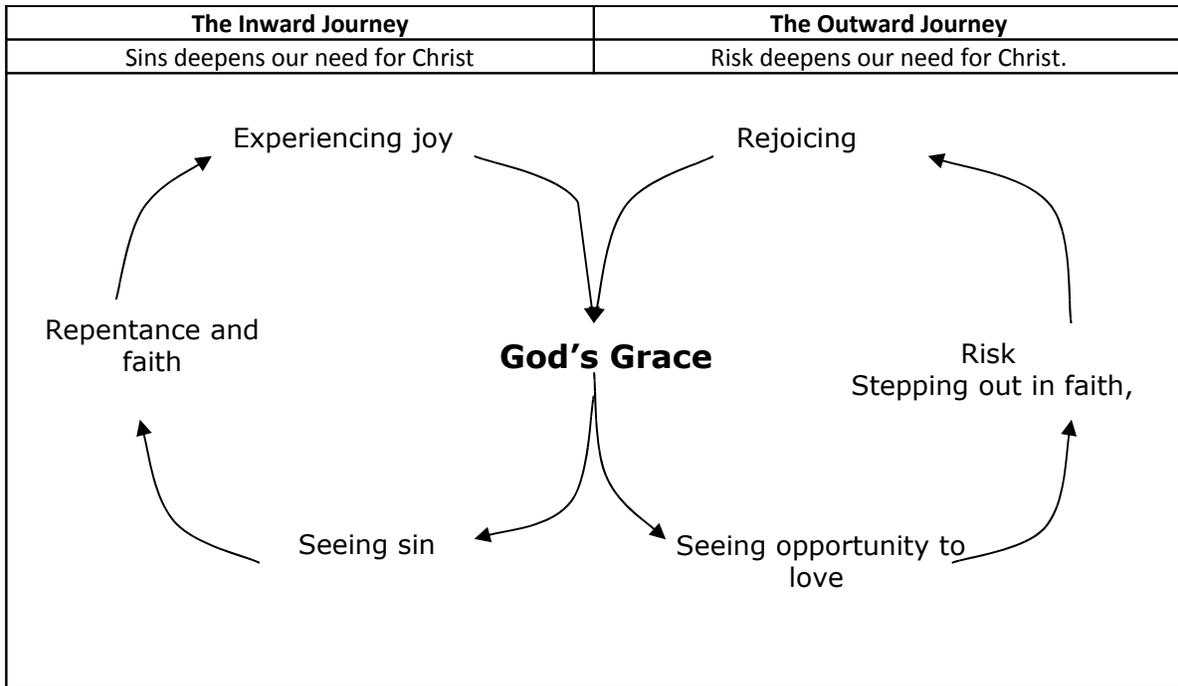
Paul Discussion Debrief

- ❖ Paul is incredibly transparent with his 'subordinates' about his struggles and failures. Loneliness (2:13) Failure (2:13) "Who is equal to such a task?" (2:16)
- ❖ Paul's task to spread the fragrance of the knowledge of God. (2:14) "Ministers of a new covenant" (3:6)
- ❖ "And who is equal to such a task?" (2:16) I am not up to the task that God has given me. I'm in over my head.
- ❖ Yet Paul has confidence in chapter 3. He doesn't have competence within himself, but a competence that comes from God (3:5) through the Holy Spirit (3:6).

Life in the Deep End of the Pool.

- ❖ There are two ways to grow in dependence on Christ.
 - One is to live a life of continual repentance and faith. This is the inward journey.

- There is another way to make your faith come alive. Allow God to take you to the place you fear the most. Allow yourself to get in way over your head.
- [Tell personal story – with picture – riding in the back of the pickup in Siberia.]



- ❖ The more we risk, the more we need Jesus and his gospel. The more we experience Jesus' forgiveness in the gospel and our faith deepens, our capacity to align our lives to God's mission in the world is deepened and we are thrust into the world.
- ❖ "Align your purpose with God's mission in the world and God in that situation delights in pouring out his power." (Steve Childers, Sonship Week 2005)

Small Group Discussion: Where do you begin?

- ❖ "God's calling on your life is where the needs of the world and the desires of your heart intersect. (Fredrick Buechner)

Discussion Questions

- Where has God broken your heart?
- What do you love?
- What would you do if you weren't afraid of failing, or if finances were not an issue or you were unafraid for your safety?

Small Group Prayer.

Pray for each member of the group that God would conquer their fears through the promises of the gospel so that they might be able to align their lives with the kingdom of God (that they may be able to love God, love their neighbor and make disciples of Jesus Christ in the unique way that God has gifted them.

Some helpful questions to direct your prayers:

- What about the gospel do they need to believe?
- What areas of their lives are they afraid to relinquish control?

