

IBCD Plenary Session #3

06.23.2023

Kim Kira

Galatians 6:14

The Power of the Gospel for Transformation

All ministry is faced with this dilemma: What people need the most – grace – we can't ultimately give them (it is the prerogative of God). This means that there is no formula for ministry that guarantees results. Because of this, to faithfully love and serve others, we must keep them in the PATHWAYS OF GRACE (we must keep them where grace is supposed to be).

Example: James 4:6 — But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Galatians 6:14 — But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

KEY IDEA: WE PUT SINNERS AND SUFFERERS IN THE PATHWAYS OF GOSPEL GRACE BY OFFERING A BETTER SAVIOR AND TELLING A BETTER STORY.

PATHWAY OF GOSPEL GRACE #1: OFFER A BETTER SAVIOR

Worship is the idea of what we live for and hope in; what we want and feel we need; what we are in awe of and have an affection for; ultimately that which captures our hearts.

We are all worshipers; every moment is a worship moment; and what we worship will determine how we live.

Romans 1:24–25 — Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Galatians 6:14 — But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which THE WORLD HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED TO ME, and I to the world. (emphasis added)

- Paul is saying, “The world is dead to me.” Before, the sin of his heart meant he was enslaved to the world and forced to worship at its altars. Now, the gospel frees him from this bondage and allows him to again worship God. No longer does he have to worship idols. He doesn’t have to follow them, love them, and live for them.

Part of the power of the gospel for transformation is that it gives us new life, and a new heart, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that enables us able to worship God as we were always meant to.

THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS OUR LIVES, BY TRANSFORMING OUR WORSHIP.

Ezekiel 36:26–27 — And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Since gospel grace transforms hearts and allows us to worship rightly, then we put others in the pathway of gospel grace by offering a better Savior. This means showing Christ is worthy to be trusted, loved and worshiped over the idols of this world.

Dr Ernie Baker, “We must push out inferior worship, with superior worship... This is one of our strongest weapons against strong desires – superior loves, hopes and trusts, defeats inferior loves, hopes, and trusts.”

Example: Stress and anxiety over finances

Matthew 6:24–25 — “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. 25 “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

Sinful stress results when our idols are threatened (or harmed or destroyed).

1 Timothy 6:10 — For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

We look to idols for what they promise us. This means, to offer a better Savior we need to know the deeper desires behind why someone worships an idol.

1 Timothy 6:17 — As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty [identity], nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches [security], but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

Knowing why they worship money (or any idol), and what they want from it, gives us clear teaching points through which to explain why Jesus is better (more trustworthy, more faithful, more true, more powerful, more holy, more loving, more steadfast, etc.).

For example, do they want money for security? Then we show them how true security is only found in Jesus.

If we want to employ and apply the gospel for transformation, we must put people in the pathway of gospel grace by offering a better Savior.

PATHWAY OF GOSPEL GRACE #2: TELL A BETTER STORY

Galatians 6:14 — But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, AND I TO THE WORLD. (emphasis added)

- Paul isn't just saying that the world is dead to him, but he is dead to the world.
- Thomas Schreiner, "The world no longer rules over them, and they are no longer beholden to the world..."

The power of the gospel literally (not figuratively) changes the narrative of a believer's life. This is important to consider, because for so many of the people we minister to, it is easy for them to see their immediate circumstances as being the whole story (especially if there is difficulty or suffering). As counselors (and story tellers), we can't let the current chapter of the story become the whole story.

Galatians 2:20 — I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- Our death to the world isn't only about death, but a new life. Paul is dead to the world, and yet never more alive; and with the cross of Christ, his life has taken a completely different trajectory.

THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS OUR LIVES BY TRANSFORMING OUR STORY.

Galatians 4:4–7 — But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Those we counsel will often tell their story devoid of God. This is often because they are trying to understand their story, all the while forgetting the Author of their story.

Since gospel grace transforms our lives by transforming our story, we put others in the pathway of gospel grace by offering a better story. This means framing their story within the bigger story of redemption, and with Christ at the center.

Example: Seeing suffering within the bigger story of the gospel

- The sufferings of someone's story are part of the bigger story of redemption. It is a story in which Christ is actively pursuing their good through whatever means necessary, even the pains of life. So, while their story seems like one of pain and suffering, in reality it is part of the bigger story of God in which those pains and sufferings have a mighty and magnificent purpose. They need to believe that not only is the story he is writing for them is far bigger and far better than they can possibly imagine, but it is better than they would write for themselves. His story is always grace and his story is always better. (Romans 5:3, 8:28-29; 1 Peter 1:3-9; James 1:2-4)

Practical application:

A. Hear and understand their story

- Examine the events and circumstances.
- Consider the story tellers in their life (What is the culture telling them? What is social media telling them? What are people in their community telling them? What are they telling themselves?)
- Try to determine how they understand the narrative of their lives in light of what they believe about God, about themselves, and about the world they live in.

B. Reframe their story within the bigger, better, and more accurate story of redemption

- Point out that the Word gives us the greater reality we live in (it is the true story, regardless of what circumstances might seem to imply).
- Explain that the biggest antagonist of the story is not suffering, but sin.
- Clarify who Christ is to their story, and how he is the hero (the story is always more about him, more than it is about us).
- Describe how God's sovereignty, love, and wisdom guide their story and always tell a better story.
- Show how even the minutia of life are part of God's plan.
- Demonstrate how the gospel means their story is one of hope.
- Tell them the end of the story (help them to see their life in light of eternity).