

The Gospel – impacting the way we do relationship

Something I struggle with: - This type of honesty may make you squirm a little

1st let's agree – (generalization) The way we Christians do life generally does not look much different than the average moral American. (How does my unsaved family see Christ in me)?

2nd Why does our message (which is drastically different than the worlds) seemingly have little tangible, practical, impact on the way we live our lives?

- Is it because we are not committed to or really trust the message (gospel)?
- Is it because we lack faith in the God of the gospel?

(Not sure of answer but I will ask two more questions that have definite answers to them).

What words would you use to describe how the world lives today?

- Fast paced, frenzied, time crunched
- Lonely, isolated
- Productive
- Unsettled, Transient
- Television, Gaming
- Extended family scattered
- Controlled by fear
- Fast-food (unhealthy eating)
- Exciting, exhilarating
- Technology driven
- Rootless

How do people do relationships today?

- Avoidance of conflict
- We have too many
- Overwhelming
- Social media driven (facebook, twitter)
- Paper-thin
- Surface
- Short-term
- Nice

Sadly, much of my life is consumed by these same patterns and rhythms of life. How about you?

Rom 12:2 - Don't conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

What is the rhythm or patter of this world - "self:" self-seeking, self-interest, self- centeredness

Let's look again at the first questions I asked.

Why does our message (which is drastically different than the worlds) seemingly have little tangible, practical, impact on the way we live our lives?

Because we approach the Gospel in an egotistical manner

- The gospel is about personal salvation
 - We forget God's plan is greater than any individual – he is building a kingdom and redeeming all creation. What will not be redeemed will be destroyed.
- We are concerned about our discipleship (that is why most of us attend a group or class)
 - We forget that God's prime directive is for us to go, to teach others obedience
 - We misunderstand that discipleship and obedience = growth in love

Most of New Testament - written to various churches: deals primarily with relationships. The greatest practical evidence of the gospels impact on our life will show in our relationships.

The world will know we are Christ's and that Jesus is God by our love and unity – Jesus (John 13 & 17)

3 Practical principles to help you live out Biblical patterns in your relationships

1. Make Time and Space

It doesn't matter how much you desire to live out Biblical relationships or how great your relational skills are if you don't have the time and space (and most of us don't)

The rhythms of this world (chaotic and complex rhythms) that most of us live under are subtly eroding love. We are made for more than work, stress and church activities – we were made for relationships, to love. When we begin to make room for relationships (real relationships) we start to live the way we were designed – we begin to live out Christian rhythms.

The Bible is clear that we were made to love God, each other and our neighbor. Honestly, can we really love when we don't have time for relationships?

Suggestions to make time and space for Relationships

- Say no to some things
 - Say no to children ruling the parent's schedule (God says foolishness is bound up in the heart of the child) – they don't know what is best.
 - Parents feel their kids are missing out or won't develop right if not super involved
 - Parents teach that church and relationships are secondary to what their children are involved in.
 - Say no to overtime
 - Say no to entertainment and hobbies that keep you from living out your faith with other believers
- Ask hard questions about your rhythm of life (spend some reflecting time to answer them)
 - What makes and keeps me busy?
 - What am I willing to sacrifice to live out Christian rhythms and resist worldly rhythms?

Couples have to have this conversation together

2. You must start with your immediate family and then expand

My wife and I do a fair job with principles number one.

- Since we were married we have always filled our home with Christian fellowship
- For the past nine years we have perpetually lived in a small group
- We have nearly always sought others avenues to live out our faith with other Christians.

I will tell that as good as I have done with number one – I have done equally bad with principles number two. Recently I have realized a lot about myself in this area primarily for two reasons.

- A small group on parenting I am leading
- My wife began working full time which threw my life upside down
 - This drove me to pray more about how I lead my family spiritually, relationally
 - This drove me to finally lay aside denial and address ways I am violating principle two.

The Bibles gives us two important verses to think on about our families.

Prov 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

1 Tim 3:5-6 If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)

We are the body of Christ and are called to care for each other, to teach obedience, and to equip and minister to each other. But we cannot do that well unless we first care for, teach obedience to, equip and minister to our own families (our spouses and children).

How can I start living Biblical rhythms so as to build Biblical relationships with my family?

- Start with Prayer (God likely has some very specific things he wants you to do or change)
- Schedule family times: meals, devotions, fun times, ect...
 - In our family my wife and I have renewed our commitment to do this. As often as we can during the week (including Sat and Sun) 6pm to 7:30 is family time
 - This means our son comes in from playing with friends or stops play on the wii or computer.
 - Luke and I set the table together for our meal
 - We eat together
 - After dinner we do the following
 - Devo: talk about a bible verse or passage (1 or 2 questions)
 - Pray together holding hands
 - Talk about our days (struggles and joys)
 - Go over our schedules together
- Schedule time for you and your spouse (some call this a date)
 - It may be awkward but perhaps it starts with just locking yourselves behind a close door just to pray with each other and talk about life.
- Limit your families time with technology
 - We tell our son 3 hours a day of technology, wii, computer, tv.
 - The parents have to live by the rule as well

Once your family is truly living out Biblical rhythms and patters then all you do is invite others to be a part of your family and your begin living out your faith together as Christ intended. Only sometimes do small groups function like this (multiple families learning to live out Biblical rhythms) but when they do they become an experience with God and others that impacts the world.

3. Learn the basics of good social skills

May not seem spiritual but how we interact with each other has implications upon how we love one another and interact as a community.

We need to learn relationships skills such as:

- How to greet another person when they come in the room
- How to ask questions of a person to get to know them
- How to listen to another person
- How to practice hospitality (invite others to your home for a meal and make them feel welcome)
- How to share life with people who are significantly different than you in personality & interest
- How to relate to people from different ethnic backgrounds
- How to handle relational conflict (if handled well it is often a good thing)

There are hundreds of passages in the Bible that teach us how we should respond and act toward one another. Why do the Bible writers spend so much time dealing with this?

- Because our relationships impacts how we live out our faith
- Because our relationships often prove or discredit our faith

- John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
- 1 John 4:7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.

Why is your relationship with other believers so important? Because it shows evidence that the message of the gospel (Christ in you) is making a practical and tangible difference in your life. – real love that makes a difference in this world is from God and people are looking for that.

Rom 12:2 - Don't conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

If your life, your relationships reflecting the pattern of this world. Don't conform to it any longer. It is an uphill battle and few will choose to intentionally engage in Biblical rhythms that impact relationships because it is hard. You can live God's best or you can continue to live under the world's pattern.

I close with this quote from Joshua – A commander of Israel.

Josh 24:15 But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."