

Building Relationships by Entering Their World and Identifying with their Suffering

INSTRUMENTS IN THE REDEEMER'S HANDS
CHAPTERS 7 AND 8

Preface: Instruments of Change

- ▶ What God has ordained for his church is both wonderful and sobering. It is wonderful because he is a jealous and determined God. His work in his people will not fail, but it will continue until it is completed. It is sobering because this work follows an “all of my people, all of the time” model.
- ▶ A Divine Mandate: “God’s plan is that through the faithful ministry of every part, the whole body will grow to full maturity in Christ.”
- ▶ Training and Mobilizing for an “every person, every day” **ministry lifestyle** is a responsibility of church leadership

Context: The Glory of God in Christ, our Savior and Redeemer

- ▶ “The sin that grips our hearts makes everything more difficult. It morphs love into selfish lust. It takes the God-ordained safety of home and makes it a place where the deepest human hurts can occur. It corrupts the workplace, robs government of its good, and even stains the church. And at the end of the day, it results in death.”
- ▶ “Change is possible because the King has come.”
- ▶ “In all of this, God’s ultimate goal is his own glory. Christ came to restore people to the purpose they were made for: to live every aspect of their lives in worshipful, obedient submission to him.”
- ▶ He daily conforms us to his own image by grace, illumination of truth, conviction of sin, repentance, and power for transformation.

Hope and Truth

- ▶ Hurting People Need Hope and Truth to address the real impact of both sinning and being sinned against.
- ▶ Hope and Truth is not merely information, insight, principles and precepts, techniques or strategies
- ▶ Hope and Truth are only to be found in Jesus Christ, the King of Kings. He is the embodiment of Love, Hope, Truth and Glory and it is only through RELATIONSHIP with HIM that we can know and experience how HE applies them to our lives.
- ▶ “Hope rests in the grace of the Redeemer, the only real means of lasting change.”

What Scripture Teaches us about SIN

- ▶ “If sin is part of our nature, we will always be dealing not only with our history, but with how sin distorts the way we handle it. Help will only come as we deal with our past and own our sin. This is essential because ***sinners tend to respond sinfully to being sinned against.***”
- ▶ ***Sin is: REBELLION, the inborn tendency to give in to the lies of autonomy, self-sufficiency, and self-focus. It results in a habitual violation of God-given boundaries.***
- ▶ ***Sin produces: FOOLISHNESS – no perspective is more reliable than my own***
- ▶ ***Sin renders us INCAPABLE of honoring and obeying God***

The Redeemer

- ▶ “The good news of the kingdom is not freedom from hardship, suffering or loss. It is the news of a Redeemer who has come to rescue me from **myself**. His rescue produces change that fundamentally alters my response to these inescapable realities. The Redeemer turns rebels into disciples, fools into humble listeners. He makes cripples walk again. In him we can face life and respond with faith, love, and hope...
- ▶ ...And as he changes us, he allows us to be part of what he is doing in the lives of others. As you respond to the Redeemer’s work in your life, you can learn to be an instrument in his hands.”

The Word of His Power

- ▶ Hebrews 1:1-4 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs
- ▶ Christ is Central and Sovereign. Christ conquered sin and purifies his children, Christ rules from on high, and He is the necessary power to break the bondage to sin in the lives of His people
- ▶ The Holy Spirit supplies the power by which we are changed and can reflect Christ to others, pointing them to the Word by which He accomplishes the same salvation in them.

The heart of the matter is: The heart is the matter

- ▶ The heart is the “real” you. “The synonym the Bible most often uses for the inner being is the heart. It encompasses all the other terms and functions used to describe the inner person (spirit, soul, mind, emotions, will, etc.)”
- ▶ The outer person versus the inner person
- ▶ The heart directs our behavior: FRUIT, ROOTS and THE HEART
No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, nor grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. - Luke 6:43-45

Calvin:

“our hearts are Idol factories”

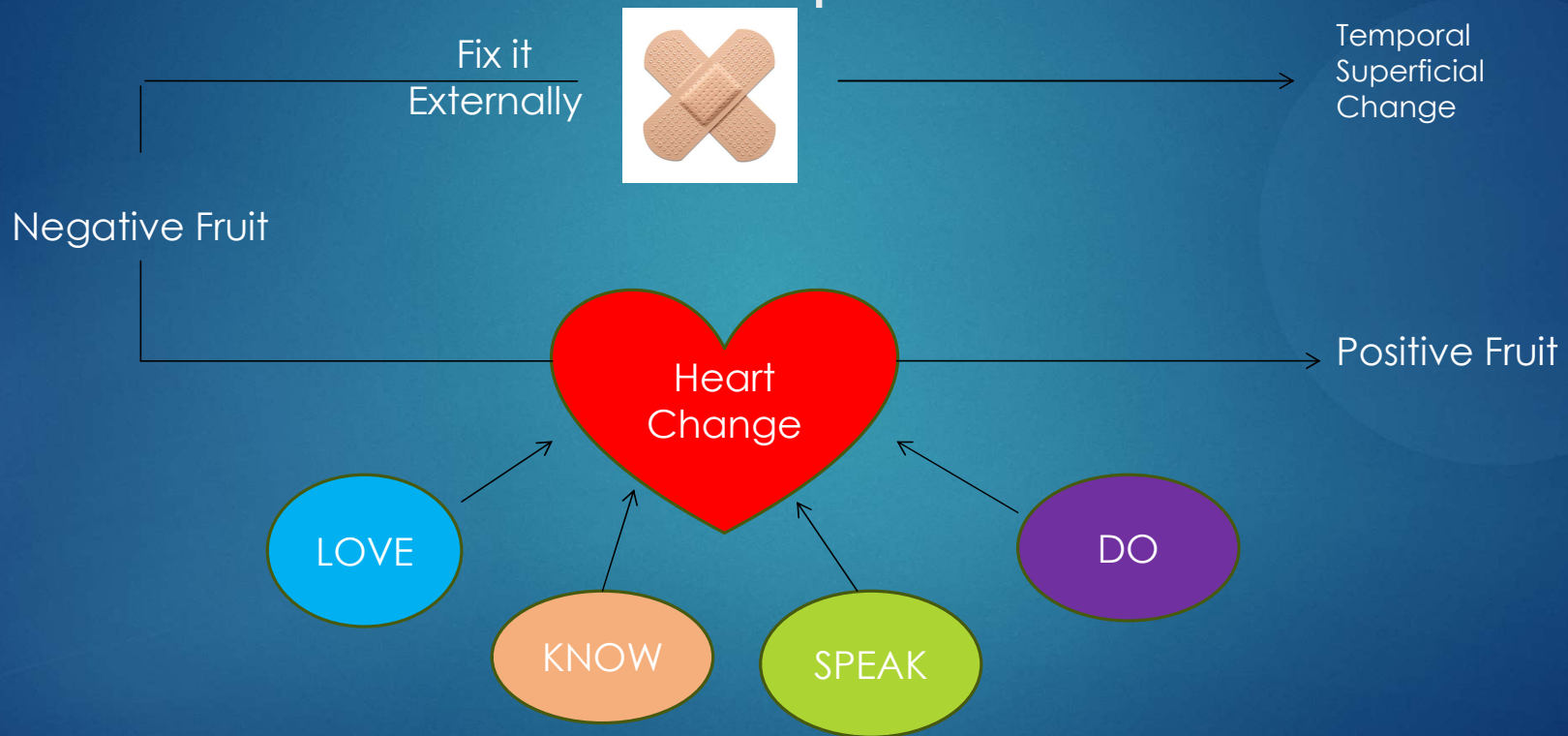
- ▶ Sin is fundamentally idolatrous. I do wrong things because my heart desires something more than or other than the Lord.
- ▶ Sin is much more than doing the wrong thing. It begins with loving, worshiping, and serving the wrong thing. Sin in some way always involves the great exchange. (i.e. worshiping the creation rather than the Creator)
- ▶ Thus, Sin is Moral Thievery—it steals the worship owed to God and directs it elsewhere.
- ▶ Covert and Overt Idolatry – Inescapable Influence over the heart
- ▶ God replacements throughout the biblical narrative.
- ▶ What does your Heart Treasure? What you treasure controls your your attitudes, responses and behaviors.

The Heart Struggle and the Wonderful Counselor

▶ TWO REALITIES:

- ▶ I must face the reality of indwelling sin and my propensity to run after god-replacements. I am called to face my duplicity and my idolatry, and the fact that this war is the most significant inner dynamic of human experience.
- ▶ I also must hold tightly to the second reality: the reality of my identity as a child of God and the resources that are therefore mine in Christ.
 - ▶ The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit
 - ▶ Our Union with Christ and all that he accomplished on the cross to pay for our sin and to rescue us from the domain of darkness

The Paradigm: Love, Know, Speak, Do



Foundational First Imperative

LOVE

- ▶ Chapter 7: Building Relationships By Entering Their World
- ▶ KEY GOAL: Closing The GAP Between our **Formal Theology** (what we embrace, know and understand from Scripture) and our **Functional Theology** (what the words, actions, behaviors of our hearts reflect to be our real governing beliefs)
- ▶ Discerning and Exposing Hypocrisy

When that GAP is progressively narrowed, or brought together by the sanctifying work of the Spirit in our hearts, we grow in INTEGRITY.

The model of Integrity is Jesus Christ, whose convictions poured out through his actions with utter consistency and perfection.

Standing in the GAP

Loving Others as the Beginning

- ▶ Tripp: “The Church is not a theological classroom. It is a conversion, confession, repentance, reconciliation, forgiveness, and sanctification center, where flawed people place their trust in Christ, gather to know and love him better, and learn to love others as he has designed. The church is messy and inefficient, but it is God’s wonderful mess—the place where he radically transforms hearts and lives.”
- ▶ “I am deeply persuaded that the **foundation** for people-transforming ministry is not sound theology; it is love.

Foundational Love

- ▶ “Love is what drove God to send and sacrifice his Son. Love led Christ to subject himself to a sinful world and the horrors of the cross. Love is what causes him to seek and save the lost, and to persevere until each of his children is transformed into his image.”
- ▶ THE **HESED** of the LORD: ***Tender Loving-Kindness, Steadfastness, Covenantal, Sacrificial, Merciful, Faithful, Gracious, Glorious***
- ▶ Powerfully Effective and Persevering/Long-Suffering and full of Hope
- ▶ Jealous and Zealous, Victorious, Full of Glory and Moving toward the consummation of Glory at His Return

LOVE: 1 Corinthians 13

1If I speak with the tongues of mankind and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2If I have *the gift of* prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3And if I give away all my possessions *to charity*, and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love, it does me no good.

4Love is patient, love is kind, it is not jealous; love does not brag, it is not arrogant. 5It does not act disgracefully, it does not seek its own *benefit*; it is not provoked, does not keep an account of a wrong *suffered*, 6it does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7it keeps every confidence, it believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of* prophecy, they will be done away with; if *there are* tongues, they will cease; if *there is* knowledge, it will be done away with. 9For we know in part and prophesy in part; 10but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away with. 11When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. 12For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I also have been fully known. 13But now faith, hope, *and* love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

The Love of Christ

- ▶ “The love of Christ is not only the foundation for our personal hope, but our incarnation of that love is our only hope for being effective for Christ with others.”

- ▶ Love Functioning in Personal Ministry: “God’s relationship to us is loving and redemptive, and he wants our relationships to mirror those qualities.”
 1. He has a higher goal for our relationships than our personal happiness
 2. He wants our relationships to be the context for the change he works in and through us
 3. We need to build relationships that encourage this work of change

What Christ's Love Accomplished

- ▶ **Justification:** In Justification by faith, God declares me to be righteous based on the perfect life, death and resurrection of Christ.

-Sin as a barrier to God in His holiness and righteousness is removed by Christ's propitiation, as he absorbed God's wrath and punishment and turned it away from us

-Righteousness is imputed to us. We are credited with the righteousness of Christ and before God are judged to be righteous

- ▶ **Adoption:** God welcomes me as His own child into His family, with all the rights and privileges that become our inheritance

- ▶ **Sanctification:** My legal standing is righteous but my **CONDITION** as a person entails a present struggle against sin. Transformation in Putting Off the Old and Putting On the New is the process of Sanctification

The Four Elements of a Loving Ministry Relationship

- ▶ 1. ENTER the person's world
- ▶ 2. INCARNATE the love of Christ
- ▶ 3. IDENTIFY with suffering
- ▶ 4. ACCEPT with agenda

1. ENTER the person's world

- ▶ Entry Gates
 - ▶ Not “Problem focused”; problem solving important but not central
 - ▶ Not focused on changing situations or relationship
 - ▶ RATHER, it has “radical personal transformation as its core goal
- ▶ Entry Gates - Need for being heard met with compassion and trust
 - ▶ It is what people confess as their “Struggle”
 - ▶ A “struggle” often presents common ground for expressed compassion
 - ▶ It is frequently at a deeper heart level below the surface of the presenting problem
 - ▶ Language Tips: *Emotional words, Interpretive words, Self Talk, God Talk*

A Shepherd's Response

- ▶ When a Shepherd finds a wounded lost sheep, he lifts the sheep up upon his shoulders and carries the sheep to a safe place
 - ▶ Let the person know you have heard his or her struggle
 - ▶ Let the person know that God is there and understands their struggle
 - ▶ Use of Psalms are particularly helpful
 - ▶ Let the person know you will stand with them, they are not alone

NOTE: This is why we must be focused on the PERSON not the Problem

Exposing the enemy's Theological LIE that God is absent in trouble

Horizontal Trust is the goal – He hears, understands, and can be trusted

Vertical Hope is the goal – Hear me. Trust me. Follow me.

Commitment to God's Process of Change – Time is an element of trust

2. Incarnate the Love of Christ

► Colossians 3:12-17 Colossians 3:12–17

[12] Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, [13] bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. [14] And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. [15] And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. [16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (ESV)

God changes people not simply because you have spoken the truth to them, but because those words were said with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love. When we do this, we become the physical evidence of the truths we present. We are not only incarnating truth, but Christ himself

Reasons to incarnate Christ in the relationships God gives us

- ▶ 1. It is a protection for you: Often people's sin will take aim at you
 - ▶ Galatians 6:1 "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."
 - ▶ Be committed to humble self-examination...especially in how we respond when being sinned against
- ▶ 2. It offers a living example: real love, compassion, gentleness, forbearance, kindness and humility..."Life isn't just discussed, it is lived"
- ▶ 3. It evidences what the Lord can do. Glory, goodness, grace
- ▶ 4. It keeps Christ central. The most important encounter is the encounter a person will have with Christ himself—He is Central

Chapter 8: Building Relationships by Identifying with Suffering

- ▶ Premise: “Our suffering ranges from the temporary wounds of someone’s thoughtlessness to horrible experiences of mistreatment and abuse. We are all suffering sinners. It is the thing we share with everyone we meet. As such, it is common ground for personal ministry.”
- ▶ The Bible has much to say about the reality of personal suffering:
 - ▶ Declares that God is sovereign over all things—even suffering
 - ▶ Declares that God is infinitely good and is with us in our most painful experiences
 - ▶ Declares that God has a purpose for our suffering: a tool of His redemptive purposes
 - ▶ Explains the ultimate reasons why we suffer
 - ▶ His Sovereignty doesn’t lessen the reality of suffering nor excuse the evildoer

Element of Love 3: Identify with Suffering

- ▶ Addressing “the private sufferer” versus the one who is “known” on the surface
- ▶ Fear of being honest / vulnerable / judged / labeled / outcast
- ▶ We are sufferers called by God to minister to others in pain. Suffering is not only the common ground of human relationships, but one of God's most useful workrooms
- ▶ Suffering and Sanctification - Identification with Christ through suffering—God's means of perfecting his children
- ▶ Goal is holiness
- ▶ Making TRUTH concrete reality for people
- ▶ Leading others to depend on Christ alone
- ▶ Contrasted with Secular approaches—encourages humility and honesty
- ▶ It redeems my story in the service of ministering to others
- ▶ Makes my life a window to the glory of Christ where others can see His work
- ▶ It results in Worship of Christ, the great redeemer. Christ as artist bringing beauty out of ashes

Comfort, Compassion, and Your Story

- ▶ 2 Cor. 1:3 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”
- ▶ The Model: Viewing Suffering and Comfort Redemptively
 - ▶ God is the source of true compassion: my identity is not in possessions or people, but in my Redeemer’s unshakeable love
 - ▶ The Bible tells us again and again that everything around us is in the process of being taken away. God and his love are all that remain as cultures and kingdoms rise and fall. Comfort is found by sinking our roots into the unseen reality of God’s ever-faithful love.
 - ▶ He is the source of compassion, as we are being conformed to His image, we are to be marked by our compassion
 - ▶ Weep with those who weep, and mourn with those who mourn

Redemptive Purposes and Hope

- ▶ The comfort we have received from the Lord has ministry in view
 - ▶ Real experience becomes the ground by which we comfort others with the comfort we have received
- ▶ God wants us to share in Christ's suffering
 - ▶ You have been called to suffer so that you would experience God's comfort. You have experienced God's comfort so that you can comfort others
 - ▶ Suffering is a sign that we are in the family of Christ and the army of the kingdom. We suffer because we carry his name. We suffer so that we may know him more deeply and appreciate his grace more fully. We suffer so that we may be part of the good he does in the lives of others.
- ▶ Our Suffering belongs to the Lord: He owns our disappointment and fear. He owns our physical and spiritual pain. He owns our past, our rejection and aloneness. It all belongs to him for his purposes.
- ▶ The redemptive purpose: Hope in a fallen world. Paul's paradigm: Suffering—Comfort. Comfort--Hope

Telling Our Story: Our Struggle, Christ's Mercy

- ▶ Testimony has God's ministry to me as its primary goal—it points to His power in having done something in me in the midst of my real struggle
- ▶ Honesty and vulnerability in my story
- ▶ Discern how much of the “gory details” to include—be purposeful. Remember the focus is on God, who met you in the midst of your suffering
- ▶ Aim to express God as the key actor in the drama of your story
- ▶ Clarify that you are not what the person needs—God is
- ▶ The goal of your story should always be Worship: All true hope and comfort are rooted in thankfulness for God, his character, and his help.

KEY: Life is not defined by our pain, but by our union with Christ

Element 4

Accept With Agenda

- ▶ Premise: “The grace that adopts me into God’s family is not a grace that says I am okay... as we enter God’s family, we are in need of radical personal change. God’s acceptance is not a call to relax, but to work.
- ▶ Titus 2:11-12 “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.”
- ▶ Grace leads to a process of change. We are justified by grace—the basis of our new identity, but now we must also be sanctified by grace—that is we are to be changed by it. Dying to the old and putting on the new. This is a process and time is an element...as is suffering.
- ▶ So we sturdily refuse to condemn, but we also refuse to condone. Heart change leading to changed thoughts, words, behaviors and actions.
- ▶ Relationships built this way become places where God’s work can thrive. People are renewed, restored, rebuilt, and refined; where God is central and given the glory that is his due

Bringing it all together

- ▶ The Glory of God in Christ, our Savior and Redeemer is Central, and worshipping Him is the most important goal as we minister to others
- ▶ Hope and Truth in Christ is the source of power in overcoming the reality of sin and its personal impact on our lives
- ▶ Counsel is not the cure---Christ is. People find ultimate help in a Person—the only unique person who has the power to save us in our struggle is Jesus Christ. We don't offer formulas, we offer a Savior!
- ▶ Heart change through the paradigm: LOVE KNOW SPEAK DO
- ▶ LOVE is the Foundation. We love by Entering a person's world, Incarnating the Love of Christ, Identify with their Suffering, and Accept with an Agenda to see Christ formed in them through real Change
- ▶ Suffering has a Purpose: To be comforted and to comfort others leading to lasting hope in this life and for eternity