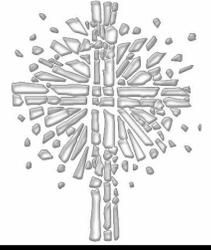




John 15:4 Abide in ME



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

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THE GOSPEL FILTER: The Gospel and the Danger of Shrinking the Cross Romans 3:9-31

THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT

The Sufficient Atonement of Christ: We believe in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood.

John Henry Jowett (1864-1923) was a Congregational pastor from England. Throughout his ministry, Jowett served at churches in Birmingham and in London, England and also in New York City. During his lifetime he was known as "the greatest preacher in the English-speaking world. The following is an excerpt from Jowett's sermon, entitled "The Power of the Cross."

Why Preach Christ Crucified?

Christ crucified preserves the sense of God's holiness. If I want to gaze upon the holiness of God, I know no place like the cross. Nowhere else do I see – speaking now not as a preacher, speaking now as a disciple – nowhere else do I see, as I see at the cross, the wondrous purity of the great White Throne. Nowhere do I more find such stillness as when I am near the cross. Nowhere do I feel so inclined to take the shoes from off my feet. . . . My brethren, I plead that we may get that note back into our religious life. We are never going to have grand trees of righteousness until they are rooted in a rich soil of reverence, and we are never, I think, going to get the requisite reverence until we find time to contemplate God's holiness; and I do not know any place that will lead us to such fruitful contemplation of God's holiness as when we take our place near the cross. "We preach Christ crucified," because the preaching of the doctrine helps us create and preserve a sense of the holiness of our God.

Christ crucified reveals the awfulness of sin. Any doctrine that unveils the holiness of God reveals also the horribleness of sin; any doctrine that obscures God's holiness veneers man's sin. If God were merely the easy-going, good-natured, lax, and kindly Deity of modern worshippers, sin would remain forever essentially unrevealed. God the lax, the kindly, good-natured, easy-going, would just bend over his rebellious children and say, "My children, I forgive you." Well my brethren, that might make us easy, but it would never make us good. Forgiveness is counterfeit when it decorates the sin it forgives. Such forgiveness only paves the way for a repetition of the offense. All forgiveness throws the most lurid illumination on the sin that is forgiven. . . . But when I stand at the cross; when I lift my eyes to the crucified Son of God; when I recall the word that He spoke, "God so loved the world that He gave His Son" (John 3:16), in the love that blazes in that death I can see something of the sin for which He died. I see it, as I see it nowhere else. When I stand at the cross, I am permitted in my measure to see sin through the eyes of my God. The cross is the place of great awakening for sinners. And explain it as we may, or leave it unexplained, the experience of the Christian church has gathered abundant witness to the truth of this statement. It is in the place where forgiveness is most supremely revealed that men have gained the most searching convictions of their sin.

Christ crucified demonstrates grace. We preach Christ crucified, because it is a doctrine in the experience of which we incomparably discern the realities of grace. The cross is not merely the birthplace of my fears, or the birthplace of my shames, or the birthplace of my disgusts. It is the birthplace of the radiant and immortal hope.

Christ crucified gives us spiritual health. We preach Christ crucified because it is the doctrine in whose heart we find ample resources for the attainment of moral and spiritual health. It is not merely a kindly friend who comes and gives you the gratifications of a pleasant and fleeting sentiment. The doctrine of Christ, and Him crucified, is generative of moral and spiritual force. It is the doctrine above all others, so far as my experience in ministry can tell, which is productive of the ethical life. It is the power of God unto salvation. . . . It is the power of God until God Himself shall put His hand upon me and say "Saved!" It is the daily foes, to front them in confidence, to overcome them, not faintingly, but to be more than a conqueror, to march over them as a man in Christ my God. So I say that for ethical revivals we must first of all have evangelical revivals. We must first of all have the doctrine of the cross before we can hope for moral elevation.

This Week's Complementary Passage

I Corinthians 1:18-25 (ESV)

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

STEP ONE . . .

READING what the passage says
(Read it at least three times)

Romans 3:9-31 (ESV)

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." ¹³ "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

STEP TWO . . .

OBSERVING how the passage moves

Return to the passage and **mark key words, phrases and movements:**

- Circle all of the words in these passages that speak of the Triune God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, etc.).
- Underline the significant verbs/action words in these passages.
- Highlight Romans 3:10-12.
- In Romans 3:19, underline the phrase "the whole world may be held accountable to God."
- Highlight Romans 3:21-26 and underline the following words and phrases: "righteousness of God," "bear witness," "through faith in Jesus Christ," "no distinction," "all have sinned," "grace," "gift," "redemption," "propitiation," "faith," "divine forbearance," and "just and the justifier."
- In Romans 3:27, underline the phrase "the law of faith."
- Highlight Romans 3:28.
- In Romans 3:30-31, underline the words "faith" and "law."

Marking Guide for Acts
(not all words occur in the passage)

appointed
baptized
Caesar
enemy/demons/Satan
eternal life
fathers & children [in one color
different from Moses]
Gentiles
gospel
grace
Holy Spirit
in the name of Jesus Christ
Jesus
Jews
Law (of Moses)
men of the council
Moses [in different color from
fathers & children]
prayer
repent (repentance)
resurrection (raised up)
salvation
suffering
the Way
the promise of the Father
witnesses
word of God

STEP THREE . . .

Ask the five "W" questions and the one "H" question:

1. **WHO** is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? And, to **whom** is it speaking?
2. **WHAT** is the subject of the passage? What does the passage say about the subject?
3. **WHEN** do or will the events occur? When did something happen to a particular person, people, or nation?
4. **WHERE** did or will this happen?
5. **WHY** is something said or mentioned? Why would or will this happen? Why at this time? Why this person?
6. **HOW** will it happen? How is it to be done? How is it illustrated?

STEP FOUR . . .

UNDERSTANDING what the passage means

This commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.

Commentary on Romans 3:9-31 (ESV)

3:9 - “Are we Jews any better off?” It is obvious that the main truth of this passage is that all humanity is in need of God’s grace. However, it is uncertain whether the specific reference was to Jews (Paul and his kinsmen) or Christians (Paul and fellow believers apart from the grace of God). Jews do have some advantages, but these advantages make them even more responsible! All humans are spiritually lost and in need of God’s grace.

“Under sin.” Paul personifies “sin” as a cruel master over fallen humanity.

3:10-18 - These verses are a series of Old Testament quotes (from Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Isaiah) using metaphors of the human body to emphasize the fallenness of mankind.

3:19 - “The law.” In this context it must refer to the whole Old Testament because of the passages quoted in verses 10-18 above.

“To those who are under the law.” This refers uniquely to Jews and Gentile converts, although it must be said that several of the Old Testament quotes refer to Gentiles.

3:20 - “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight.” As a committed Pharisee, Paul uniquely knew the inability of religious enthusiasm and meticulous performance to provide inner peace.

“Through the law comes knowledge of sin.” This was one of the purposes of the Old Testament. It was never meant to bring salvation to fallen mankind. Its purpose was to reveal sinfulness and drive all humans to the mercy of God.

3:21 - “But now.” Paul is contrasting the Old Covenant with the New Covenant, the old age of rebellion with the new age of righteousness.

“The righteousness of God.” This does not refer to God’s character, but God’s way of imparting forgiveness and acceptance to sinful people. This clearly revealed mechanism is faith in the crucified Jesus Christ. This Greek term translated as “righteousness” is from an Old Testament construction metaphor of “a standard” or “a measuring reed.” The standard is God Himself. This term reflects God’s character which is freely given to fallen mankind through Christ. Admitting their need and accepting God’s gift was, and is, so humiliating to prideful, self-centered people, especially legalistic, religious people.

“Has been manifested.” This verb can also be translated “has been and continues to be clearly revealed.” God has clearly revealed the gospel both in the Old Testament and in His Son, Jesus Christ.

“Apart from the law.” It is often hard to be certain whether Paul is referring to the Mosaic Law or law in general in these opening chapters. In this context the Jewish Law fits Paul’s

argument best. All humans have violated every set of moral, societal guidelines whether internal or external. Our problems as fallen mankind are that we want no guidelines at all except our own selfish, self-centered desires.

“Although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it.” This clearly showed that the gospel was contained in preliminary form in the Old Testament. It was not an afterthought, “Plan B,” or a reboot.

3:22 - “through faith in Jesus Christ.” This can be literally translated “through faith of Jesus Christ.” Therefore it could mean (1) the faith or faithfulness of Jesus or (2) Jesus as the object of our faith. However, the latter meaning is most probable. This shows the main aspect of God’s justification. It is the righteousness of Christ made operative in one’s life by God’s free gift through Christ, which must be accepted by faith/belief/trust and lived out in one’s daily life.

“For all.” The gospel is for all humans. What a great truth! God promised to redeem fallen man. God called and chose all mankind through Israel. God elects through faith in Christ. God always takes the initiative in salvation. God chose believers not only to salvation (justification), but also to sanctification. This could relate to (1) our position in Christ or (2) God’s desire to reproduce His character in His children. God’s will for His children is both heaven one day and Christ-likeness now!

“Who believe.” Jesus died for all humans. Potentially all can be saved. It is mankind’s personal reception that makes Jesus’ righteousness applicable to their lives. The Bible presents two criteria for imputed righteousness: faith and repentance. This text clearly reveals the universal scope of salvation, but not all will be saved.

“For there is no distinction.” There is only one way and one Person by which humans (Jews and Gentiles) can be saved. Anyone can be saved by faith in Christ.

3:23 - “For all have sinned and fall short.” Everyone needs to be saved by Christ. “Sinned” may refer to both mankind’s collective fall in Adam and his continual individual acts of rebellion.

“The glory of God.” The biblical concept of “glory” is difficult to define. In the Old Testament the most common Hebrew word for “glory” was originally a commercial term relating to a pair of scales (“to be heavy”). That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty. He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold. The Lord can only be truly known through Christ. The term “glory” has multiple connotations: (1) it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”; (2) it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God; or (3) it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created, but which was later marred through rebellion. It is first used of the Lord’s presence with His people during the wilderness wandering period.

3:24 - “Are justified by his grace as a gift.” This is where the gospel begins - the grace of God who gives righteousness. God always takes the initiative. In verses 24-25 there are three metaphors used to describe salvation: (1) “justified” which was a legal term that meant “no penalty given” or to pronounce one not guilty; (2) “redemption” which was from the slave market that meant “bought back” or “to set free”; and (3) “propitiation” which was from the sacrificial system and meant the place of covering or atonement. It referred to the lid of the Ark of the Covenant where sacrificial blood was placed on the Day of Atonement.

“Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” The mechanism for our salvation is Jesus’ substitutionary death and resurrection. The biblical focus is not on how much was paid or to whom the price was paid, but on the fact that mankind has been delivered from sin’s guilt and punishment by means of an innocent substitute. The verse also shows the costliness of Genesis 3:15. Jesus bore the curse and died as a substitute for fallen mankind. Salvation may be free, but it is surely not cheap.

3:25 - “Whom God put forward.” God Himself revealed His own heart and purpose by the death of Christ. God’s eternal redemptive plan involved the sacrifice of Jesus. God wanted humanity to clearly understand His redemptive purpose, plan, and righteousness. This context is setting out a biblical worldview about God’s character, about Christ’s work, about humanity’s need, and about redemption’s purpose. God wants us to understand! This context is crucial for a proper understanding of Christianity. Some of the words and phrases are ambiguous or can be understood in several ways, but the thrust of the whole is very clear and plain. This context is the theological North Star for the New Testament.

“As a propitiation by his blood.” In the Greco-Roman world this word carried the concept of a restoration of fellowship with an estranged deity by means of a price being paid, but not in this sense in the Old Testament. It was used in the Old Testament to translate “mercy seat,” which was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant located in the Holy of Holies, the place where atonement was procured on behalf of the nation on the Day of Atonement. This term must be understood in a way that does not lessen God’s revulsion to sin, but affirms His positive redemptive attitude toward sinners. One way to accomplish this is to translate the term so that it reflects God’s work in Christ, “a propitiatory sacrifice,” or “with propitiatory power.” “By His blood” is a Hebraic way of referring to the substitutionary sacrifice of the innocent lamb of God. Blood refers to a sinless life given on behalf of the guilty.

“To be received by faith.” Here again is the mechanism for anyone and everyone to personally benefit from Jesus’ substitutionary death.

“To show God’s righteousness.” God must be true to His character and His word. In the Old Testament the soul that sins must die. God said He would not acquit the guilty. Yet, God’s love for fallen mankind is so great He was willing to become a man, fulfill the Law and die in fallen humanity’s place. Love and justice meet in Jesus.

“He had passed over former sins.” The term translated “passed over” may mean “the forgiveness of a debt.” However this term

may also mean “to let pass beside” or “to relax.” So the question is, did God forgive sins in the past looking toward Christ’s future work or did He simply overlook them knowing Christ’s death would deal with the sin problem? The result is the same. Human sin, past, present, and future, is dealt with by Christ’s sacrifice. This was a past act of God’s grace looking forward to Christ’s work as well as a present and future act. God did not and does not take sin lightly, but He does accept Jesus’ sacrifice as a full and final remedy to human rebellion as a barrier to eternal fellowship with Himself.

3:26 - “He might be just and the justifier.” God desires His character to be manifested in believers’ lives through faith in Christ. Jesus becomes our righteousness but believers must also become conformed to His righteousness, His likeness.

3:27 - “Then what becomes of our boasting?” The presence of the “our” with “boasting” reflects the pride of the Jews. The gospel is humbling. Fallen mankind (both Jews and Gentiles) cannot help themselves in any way.

“By the law of faith.” God’s New Covenant is not based on performance, but on trust/faith/belief in His gracious character and promises. Both the Old and New Covenants were meant to change fallen mankind into God’s character (righteous). The Old by an external law; the New by a new heart. The goal is the same!

3:28 - “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.” This verse provides a summary of Romans 3:21-26 and a foreshadowing of Romans chapters 4-8. Salvation is a free gift through faith in Christ’s finished work. However, maturity is a “cost everything” life of obedience, service, and worship.

3:29 - God’s purpose has always been to redeem all humans made in His image. The redemptive promise found in Genesis 3:15 is for everyone. He chose Abraham in order to choose the world. This verse may reflect tension in the Roman church between believing Jewish leadership, who may have left Rome following the edict of Claudius, and the resulting believing Gentile leadership, who replaced them.

3:30 - “Since God is one.” This sentence is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. If monotheism is true, and it is, then He must be the God of all people.

“Who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.” There is only one way to be right with God. The two criteria for salvation are faith and repentance. This is true for both Jews and Greeks.

3:31 - “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith?” The New Testament presents the Old Testament in two different ways: (1) it is inspired, God-given revelation that will never pass away and (2) it is worn out and has passed away. Paul used the term “nullify” at least twenty-five times. It is translated “make null and void,” “render powerless,” and “to make of no effect.” For Paul the Law was a custodian and tutor, but it could not give eternal life. It is the grounds of man’s condemnation. The Mosaic Law functioned both as revelation and a moral test as did the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

“On the contrary, we uphold the law.” In light of the previous phrase, what does this phrase mean? It could indicate that (1) the Law was not a way of salvation but it was a continuing moral guide; (2) it testified to the doctrine of “justification by faith”; (3) the Law’s weakness was fully satisfied by Christ’s death; or (4) the purpose of revelation is to restore the image of God in man. The Law, after forensic righteousness, becomes a guide to true righteousness or Christlikeness. The shocking paradox is that the Law failed to establish God’s righteousness but through its nullification, by means of God’s gift of grace through faith, the Christian lives a righteous, godly life. The goal of the Law has been met, not by human performance, but by the free gift of the grace of God in Christ!

Resource for Commentary: Robert James Utley’s *Study Guide Commentary Series* from Logos software.

STEP FIVE . . .

SUMMARIZING the message

“The Gospel” is a phrase that Christians often use without fully understanding its significance. We speak the language of the gospel but God wants us to know how to apply the gospel to every aspect of our lives. The gospel is nothing less than “the power of God” (Romans 1:16). In Colossians 1:6, Paul commends the Colossian church, because the gospel has been “bearing fruit and increasing... in [them] since the day [they] heard it.” Peter insists that a lack of progressive transformation comes from forgetting what God has done for us in the gospel (2 Peter 1:3-9). If we are to grow into maturity in Christ, we must deepen and enlarge our understanding of the gospel as God’s chosen means for personal transformation.

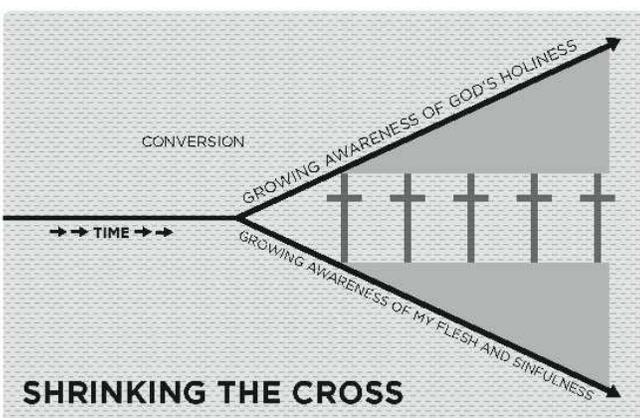
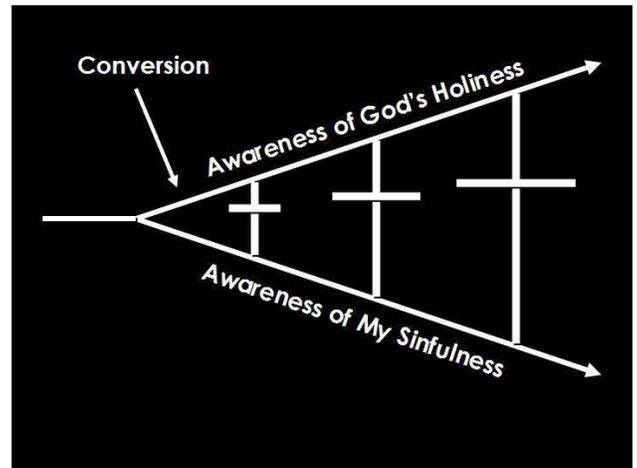
Many Christians live with a limited view of the gospel. We tend to view the gospel as simply the entry point into God’s kingdom. The gospel is so much more! It is not just the door to the kingdom but the path we are to walk every day as we follow Christ. The gospel is not just the means of our salvation but the means of our transformation. It is not simply deliverance from sin’s penalty but also the release from sin’s power. The gospel is what makes us right with God (justification). It is also what frees us to be changed by God (sanctification).

The diagram to the right is a helpful way to think about the gospel and its implications. This diagram does not say everything that could be said about the gospel but it does illustrate how the gospel works.

The starting point of the Christian life (conversion) comes when I first become aware of the gap between God’s holiness and my sinfulness. When I am converted, I trust and hope in Jesus, who has done what I could never do. Jesus has bridged the gap between my sinfulness and God’s holiness. He has taken God’s holy wrath toward my sin upon Himself.

At the point of conversion, however, I have a limited view of God’s holiness and of my sinfulness. The more I grow in my Christian life, the more I grow in my awareness of God’s holiness but also of my flesh and sinfulness. Through reading the Bible, experiencing the Holy Spirit’s conviction, and living in community with other people, the extent of God’s greatness and the extent of my sin become increasingly clear and vivid. It is not that God is becoming more holy, or that I am becoming more sinful but my awareness of both is increasing. I am increasingly seeing God as He actually is (Isaiah 55:8-9) and myself as I actually am (cf. Romans 3:9-20).

As my understanding of my sin and of God’s holiness grows, something else is expanding: my appreciation and love for Jesus. His mediation, His sacrifice, His righteousness, and His gracious work on my behalf become increasingly sweeter and more powerful to me. The cross looms larger and more central in my life as I rejoice in the Savior who died upon it.



Unfortunately, sanctification (growth in holiness) doesn’t work quite as neatly as we’d like. Because of the indwelling sin which remains in my flesh, I tend to minimize the gospel or “shrink the cross.” This occurs when: 1) I minimize God’s perfect holiness, thinking of Him as something less than His Word declares Him to be, or 2) I minimize the depth of my sin and brokenness, thinking of myself as someone better than I really am. Either way, the cross becomes smaller and Christ’s importance in my life is diminished.

In order to neutralize our sinful tendency to shrink the gospel, we must constantly nourish our minds and hearts on biblical truth. We need to know and savor the holy character of God. We need to identify, admit, and feel the depth of our brokenness and sinfulness. We don’t need to do these things because “that’s what Christians are supposed to do.” Rather, we make this our aim because it is the life God wants for us – a life marked by transforming joy, hope and love.

Growing in the gospel means seeing more of God's holiness and more of my sin. And because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross, we need not fear seeing God as He really is or admitting how broken we really are. Our hope is not in our own goodness, nor in the vain expectation that God will compromise his standards and "grade on a curve." Rather, we rest in Jesus as our perfect Redeemer – the One who is "our righteousness, holiness, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Six Ways We Minimize Sin

Defending. I find it difficult to receive feedback about weaknesses or sin. When confronted, my tendency is to explain things away, talk about my successes, or to justify my decisions. As a result, I rarely have conversations about difficult things in my life.

Pretending. I strive to keep up appearances, maintain a respectable image. My behavior, to some degree, is driven by what I think others think of me. I also do not like to think reflectively about my life. As a result, not very many people know the real me (I may not even know the real me).

Hiding. I tend to conceal as much as I can about my life, especially the "bad stuff." This is different than pretending in that pretending is about impressing. Hiding is more about shame. I don't think people will accept the real me.

Blaming. I am quick to blame others for sin or circumstances. I have a difficult time "owning" my contributions to sin or conflict. There is an element of pride that assumes it's not my fault AND/OR an element of fear of rejection if it is my fault.

Minimizing. I tend to downplay sin or circumstances in my life, as if they are "normal" or "not that bad." As a result, things often don't get the attention they deserve, and have a way of mounting up to the point of being overwhelming.

Exaggerating. I tend to think (and talk) more highly of myself than I ought to. I make things (good and bad) out to be much bigger than they are (usually to get attention). As a result, things often get more attention than they deserve, and have a way of making me stressed or anxious.

Concepts in this message have been gleaned from several sources: 1) *Renewal as a Way of Life* by Richard Lovelace; 2) *Sonship* by Paul Miller; 3) *The Gospel-Centered Life* by Bob Thune and Will Walker.

STEP SIX . . .

EXPLORING the passage through discussion

1. Read Mark 1:1. Take a moment to describe the gospel by framing its essential components and long-term implications.

2. What are the implications of viewing the gospel only as the entry point into the Christian life?

3. Review the first diagram under the section, Summarizing the Message. What two concepts are vital in order to grow in our walk and experience ongoing transformation?
 - a. Read Isaiah 55:6-9. What does this passage say to us about God?

 - b. Read Romans 3:9-20. What does this passage say to us about ourselves?

 - c. Read 2 Peter 1:3-9. Peter states that our lack of spiritual progress is the result of something we forget. Specifically, what are we prone to forget? How does a big view of the gospel help us to add to our faith and overcome sin?

4. Review the second diagram. What are the two ways we tend to minimize or shrink the cross?

5. Review the six ways we minimize or rationalize our sin. Which one of these tactics do you do most often? Would anyone be willing to share a recent example of how you used one of these ways?

6. When we minimize our sin as “not so bad,” our spiritual progress stalls. How does a full understanding of the gospel help us to face our sin and experience ongoing life change?

7. Wrap-up. The gospel (the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus) provides both our justification and our sanctification. There is no forgiveness and no progress apart from a big view of the cross. In what ways is this concept new, surprising, or affirming for you?

STEP SEVEN . . .

APPLYING the passage to my life

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the Word but doers ~ James 1:22

When you apply God’s Word, you are thinking about what God might be saying to you through the Scriptures. Application involves action. Application makes your reading become a reality in your own life. Make your applications specific (State who, what & when). You are encouraged to use the **S.P.E.C.K.** method to apply God’s Word to your life. Remember that each passage of Scripture may not lend itself to answering all five of these questions.

S – SINS to confess and avoid (Are there sinful actions, attitudes, or thoughts that you need to confess to God based upon your study of these Scriptures?)

P – PROMISES to claim (List God’s promises for you from these Scriptures.)

E – EXAMPLES to follow (What examples, for right thinking or right actions, can you take for you own life from these Scriptures?)

C – COMMANDS to obey (List God’s commands for you from these Scriptures and seek to be obedient to them.)

K – KNOWLEDGE of God to apply (God’s character is visible throughout the Scriptures as an example to us. What attributes and/or attitudes does God display that you can apply to your own life?)

This Week’s Memory Verse

During this sermon series we will memorize one verse weekly from **II Peter 1:3-9**.

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. II Peter 1:3 (ESV)

THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

10 CORE BELIEFS OF A DISCIPLE

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

The Godhead *2 Corinthians 13:14*

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Deity and Sinlessness of Christ *Colossians 2:9*

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life.

The Sufficient Atonement of Christ *2 Corinthians 5:19-21*

We believe in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood.

The Resurrection and Return of Christ *Acts 1:3, 9-11*

We believe in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and that a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit *John 14:16*

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

Unity in Christ *Ephesians 2:14-17*

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eternity *Revelation 21:22-27*

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

We believe that everything we have or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES OF A DISCIPLE

Undiluted Worship *Matthew 22:37-40*

Loving the Lord God with all of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual vigor and, my neighbor as myself.

Constant Abiding *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

Reading the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for daily life.

Desperate Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

Praying to God to know Him, laying requests before Him and, finding direction for daily life.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

Using my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Total Forgiveness *Ephesians 4:30*

Practicing forgiving others as God has forgiven me in Christ.

Tangible Compassion *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

Generous Giving *2 Corinthians 8:7*

Giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

God Space *Ephesians 6:19-20*

Increasing the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

10 CORE VIRTUES OF A DISCIPLE

Love - a sincere affection for others *1 John 4:10-12*

Love is acting in someone else's interest no matter who they may be, no matter how you feel, and no matter what it costs.

Joy - a delight unaffected by circumstances *John 15:11*

An inner delight in God that is sustained in spite of the changing seasons of life.

Peace - an abiding sense of harmony *Philippians 4:6-7*

Relationships are free from friction. Positively, it describes harmonious relations with others in the church.

Patience - a willingness to stick with things *Proverbs 3:3-4*

Being willing to live with a difficult situation for a long time—even if things are slow to change or never change.

Kindness - a sense of compassion in the heart *Job 6:14*

An inner disposition that puts others at ease and out of which kind actions flow.

Goodness - a goodness that flows outwardly *1 Thess. 5:15*

Choosing to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Faithfulness - an unwavering loyalty *Psalm 26:3*

Being the kind of people who keep our word to one another.

Gentleness/Humility - an attitude of humility without any entitlement; a lack of self-awareness *Philippians 4:5; 2:3-4*

Gentleness is power and strength under God's control.

Humility is considering others above myself, if I consider myself at all.

Self-Control - an ability to direct your energy wisely

Titus 2:11-13

The strength to restrain our desires, emotions, and actions has to come from within rather than from some outside source.

Hope - a certainty of what is to come *Hebrews 6:19-20*

Coping with the hardships of life and with death because of hope in Christ.

Each week this Bible Study will feature either a core belief, practice or virtue vital for growing disciples.

OT in 52
(52 weeks through the Old Testament)

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE READING IN A YEAR

Monday, October 3 thru Saturday, October 8
Isaiah 2-5, 6-9, 10-13, 14-18, 19-22, 23-26

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