

Theology 4.2 – Gospel Centered Ministry

Gospel Centered Ministry – it may not be intuitively obvious, however the heart of all Christian ministry is the Gospel of Christ; which plays out through the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Though the form of ministry is often programmatic, the substance of ministry must be rooted in the Gospel. The following material was presented in a seminar by Dr Jeff Louie at Western Seminary in the Fall of 2010.

- 1. Understanding Grace Trajectory** – New Testament Grace is firmly rooted in Old Testament Grace; and though the two share many thematic similarities, and also because basic human nature remains the same, the context in which God reveals Grace through redemptive history has been quite different.
 - a. Old Testament was very violent** – when we read and study the Old Testament and the Old Covenants that comprise it, it is apparent that it was a very violent and turbulent time. Much of this reflects the cultural and historical flavor of the time because:
 - i. The focus was on conquering and occupying the land of promise amid a hostile Pagan environment.**
 - ii. Once the initial conquering phase was established, the focus turned to holding the land and defending the people of God from a hostile regional Pagan environment.**
 - iii. Both of these efforts were violent by their nature... but the trajectory turned from aggressive conquest to a defensive posture. The building of the walls surrounding Jerusalem and the fortification of many major regional cities bears testimony to this change. Furthermore, the cultural and Spiritual world views of the adjacent and regional nations being Paganist, were not compatible with the ethical and Spiritual mono-theism God called His people to express to the world (Exodus 19:5-6).**
 - b. New Testament was quite different** – there were isolated struggles, but for the most part the Pax Romana allowed for a time of political stability in a wide regional approach. This was the first time such an era of extended peace occurred in the tumultuous Middle East. It was a peace imposed by Rome who also solidified their hold on the region through building roads, aqueducts, and regional defensive strongholds; all of which enabled safer travel, better communication, and international commerce. Jesus entered history at a time when the needs of God’s people had changed, the people needed to be protected from external human threats less, and the internal threat of Spiritual Warfare became the primary obstacle. Into this substantial change Messiah Jesus presented the Gospel... His New Covenant of Grace with a new ethic:
 - i. The birth of Jesus was protected by regional political stability. When a threat emerged from Herod, there was a neighboring segment of the political world that would harbor Jesus and His family until this threat was removed [Egypt has long served this function in the Middle East].**
 - ii. Jesus’ ministry was protected by greater social integration within the Jewish communities, and He taught more about the Spiritual and physical realms of the Kingdom of God in this changing context.**

- iii. **The development of the earthly kingdom of humanity as revealed in Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream progressed from Babylon (Gold), to Medes-Persian (Silver), to Greek (Bronze) to Iron (Rome) in the great statue – Daniel 2:29-33. Jesus being the Rock cut out of the Mountain of God without human hands that shattered the ‘feet’ of the statue which destroyed worldly Pagan institutions.**
 - iv. **Jesus being rejected by the Jews as their Messianic King was necessary for the fulfillment of the Old Testament atonement ritual, as redemptive history continued through a progression that culminated in Jesus ministry, the Cross, Resurrection, Pentecost, and Parousia. The Grace of the Gospel replaced the lesser Grace of the Law.**
 - v. **However, God’s people would need to remain true with God’s original calling (1 Peter 2:9-12) and incompatible with the world order.**
- c. **Esther – as seen in terms of Grace trajectory:**
- i. **Theme of the nation of “Israel” was in conflict with other nations and worldly orders:**
 - 1. **The Book of Esther has a distinctive “Secular-Jewish” perspective – the nation has been reduced to a community in a semi-peaceful environment. It is noteworthy that God is not mentioned at all in the Book of Esther... this is a clue relating to the people’s secular priorities!**
 - 2. **The unusual background and setting – and the intriguing developments allow for the possibility of deliverance from a most unconventional savior... a young queen Esther. The fact that it would be a miraculous deliverance hints to the activity of God providentially working in the background as circumstances develop from uncomfortable, to dangerous, to immanent crisis, to miraculous deliverance, and retribution against the Nation’s antagonist. Though God is not mentioned, He is always there.**
 - 3. **Destruction of the enemy – is centered in a person of political prominence (Haman) in the service of the king (Xerxes of the Medes-Persian empire, Xerxes died in 465 BC). Haman set out to destroy God’s people.**
 - 4. **Preparation for Battle – the queen asks her people to prepare by fasting and prayer... this would not be wise for a physical battle, but completely appropriate for a Spiritual battle. The people had no recourse against a physical battle, they had no military presence of any kind. Thus they had to throw themselves completely upon God’s Grace, and trust that He would intervene and deliver them.**
 - 5. **Feast to commemorate victory – the victory celebration is less about the direct participants, and more about recognizing that it was God who providentially orchestrated the victory – Esther 4:12-14. This lands in the New Covenant with Romans 8:28.**

ii. Theme of “God”

1. Although He is not mentioned, it is understood that God is in and behind all these circumstances and events. It suggests we now and always, must be careful to pay attention to see where God is operating and to catch up with what He is doing.
2. God’s Sovereign protection of the Chosen is likewise understood. Not unlike the deliverance in Egypt through Moses, God is now delivering His people from Xerxes.
3. God’s faithfulness is a given even to nominal believers. As the pressure mounts and destruction of the people is imminent, God providentially intervenes through the faith of a young queen who submitted first to God and second to king Xerxes. Esther’s faith and submission is immortalized in her resignation “If I perish, I perish” – Esther 4:16.
4. God uses all circumstances to accomplish His purpose – even a beauty pageant won by Esther, and a decadent and immoral vassal king (Xerxes)... are subject to God’s Sovereignty.
5. God can miraculously use those who purposefully stand in faith believing (Zechariah 4:6).

iii. Applications of Old Testament to New Testament:

1. Transition to the destruction of enemies in terms of Jesus’ ministry is telling:
 - a. Similar to Old Testament, we believe we can defend ourselves – In New Testament Peter took a sword as protection for the encounter in the Garden of Gethsemane. Outward action is both aggressive and defensive. Dissimilar to Old Testament, different Kingdom emphasis – It is no longer the “outer man – physical me against them,” but rather the “inner man – Spiritual God’s Grace against the Law” in the battle against evil and sin. This is the story behind the events in Jesus’ Garden of Gethsemane experience.
 - b. Instead of the Old Testament an “eye for an eye” we are told in the New Testament to “turn the other cheek” – Matthew 5:38-39.
 - c. Instead of an Old Covenant animal sacrificial system to gain forgiveness from God, in the New Covenant we are told we need to forgive others to be forgiven – Matthew 6:14-15.
 - d. Instead of our outward action proving our faith, it is now our inward action of our character and the condition of our heart that Jesus speaks about in the Beatitudes – Matthew 5:1-ff. The highest calling is to live out of love and grace... this change means a whole different level of life that transcends the Law.
 - e. Judgment is suspended... by grace. We pass out of judgment into eternal life as a gift from God received by faith... not by the merit of works.

d. New Testament Theology at work in Acts:

- i. Instead of accumulating and hoarding wealth, the Gospel encourages us to deliberately seek to be a blessing to others and invest our resources strategically as God gives us the ability and insight to respond – Acts 2:42-47.**
 - 1. Wealth remains overly valued in Protestantism where we tend to validate our New Covenant theology by the Old Covenant Biblical narrative. This notion is the basis for the so-called “Prosperity Gospel” that has confused so many believers. In the Old Covenant, people believed that those who were blessed with wealth and health were favored by God. But in the New Covenant the Beatitudes demonstrates that all receive Blessing regardless of your social position.**
 - 2. How did the initial New Covenant believers deal with their worldly wealth? They invested it in meeting the needs of others and expanding the Kingdom of God; they gave of their worldly wealth in preference for developing their Heavenly wealth. In other words, the Kingdom of God became not just their hope, but their identity.**
 - ii. Old Covenant wealth was seen a demonstration of God’s blessing and it validated God’s love of the person. Protestants tend to follow Old Covenant thought, where the 10% tithe was the norm. In the New Covenant financial worship becomes the love offering predicated on the understanding that nothing is ours, because we were purchased at a price and are called to be willing living sacrifices for the Kingdom of God.**
 - iii. New Covenant wealth – If we understood that our treasure really is Heaven itself because we are heirs of the Kingdom (Romans 8:17), we realize we have already won the lottery! We are beyond millionaires, or even gazillionaires! Not just because we go to Heaven, but it is our rightful inheritance as Children of the King. Do we really believe this? Why don’t we live it?**
 - iv. Unless we come to believe what we already have is a gift we are called to manage for God’s purposes, we live in bondage rather than in freedom. In the New Covenant, bondage is to the material, and freedom is to the spiritual; this is the proper perspective in terms of eternity.**
 - v. In Acts, Christians are generous because they know what they have received... the reason hundreds of thousands of believers accepted death rather than renounce their faith is because they would not jeopardize the reality of what God had given them... personally and collectively. This was not a blind hope, but a realized experience of Amazing Grace.**
- 2. Evidence of Historical Redemptive figures and their actions that transpired and still affect faith practice:**
 - a. Wilberforce & Shaftsbury – were both wealthy Englishmen... they were both landowners and politicians.**
 - i. Wilberforce spent 39 years to end the sales of slaves... it wasn’t until just before his death that he saw the end of slavery and the emancipation of the slaves.**

- ii. Shaftsbury was a leader in the reform of social law, though lesser known than Wilberforce, his accomplishments were very significant and included:
 - 1. Child labor law reform – at the time it was OK to employ children at the young age of 5 years old to work 10-12 hours a day in a variety of occupations including coal mines, and the textile industry. They labored in exchange for food and a place to sleep. Shaftsbury’s initial reform set an age limit of 12 before a child could legally work.
 - 2. Education reform – at the time only the wealthy could afford to go to school, the remainder had to work. Shaftsbury was a big proponent of education of the poor. He provided free education for “street kids” initially called the “Ragged School.”
 - 3. Treatment of the mentally ill reform – It was standard practice at the time to chain mentally ill people to a wall and leave them unattended in a Sanatorium... essentially a dungeon existence for the insane. He encouraged laws that changed this to a more human practice that set the stage for modern mental health practices.
 - 4. Lender reform – he pioneered micro-loans to the poor so they could emerge beyond their poverty and break the ongoing cycle of generational poverty.
 - 5. Animal rights reform – he helped found the first humane society for the prevention of cruelty of animals.
- iii. In all of these reforms, the priority was the same in essence – “what is the responsibility for a faithful Christ follower to deal with the their ‘assets’ and the people and animals in their care as stewards of Grace?”
- iv. The question both responded to was “How can we claim to be God’s people if you don’t change practices that degrade human dignity?” “If all are ‘created in the image of God,’ What does a society look like that accepts this principle as a foundational human right?” This plays off of Jesus’ teaching that if you know the good you ought to do and don’t do it, it is sin – Luke 6:45; 1 Corinthians 10:24; James 4:17.
- b. Bruce Wilkinson – a Western Seminary Graduate
 - i. Founded “Walk Through the Bible” in 1972 as a ministry to educate Christians on Biblical Literacy using simple ideas and media distribution. This became his greatest contribution as Biblical Literacy gained traction all over the world.
 - ii. He later wrote the best-selling book “The Prayer of Jabez” – based on his unfortunate misinterpretation of 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. His teachings are considered heretical by many conservative Christian theologians, while it is embraced by many liberal theologians. The problem with his teaching is that he essentially turns God into the proverbial ‘Genie in a Bottle’ who grants prayer giving you whatever you want if you know how to ask for it. This is not what the Biblical perspective of prayer is all about, Biblical prayer instead is about deliberately pressing into God where our hearts are conformed to God’s heart so

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we become a vehicle for His grace. See this link to Authentic Discipleship Introduction of Spiritual Disciplines followed by 2 prayer articles -

<http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Disciplines/SF%201.0%20Introduction%20to%20the%20Spiritual%20Disciplines.pdf>

- iii. Wilkinson formed the “Dream for Africa” ministry which gained support for orphanages in Swaziland... Rick Warren and Robert Schuler bought heavily into it.
 1. Plan called for the development of a tourist destination including golf course, theme park and amusement park which would fund the orphanages.
 2. Plan expected the African governments to donate the land, which they refused to do.
 3. Bruce was convinced that the prayer of Jabez would produce his desired results.
 4. Bruce’s problem included that his dream was out of sync with God’s redemptive plans as well as African’s dream for their future. The idea that an American millionaire could produce desired results while being ignorant of Africa’s own dreams and politics was naive at best. He eventually clashed with Africa’s own social structure and African leadership plans for social improvement.
 5. His own theology couldn’t deal with their refusal and the resultant failure he suffered... he ended his mission and returned to America in disgrace.
- iv. He found out the hard way that success in one arena doesn’t necessarily result in success in another. Just because you have a noble idea, doesn’t necessarily mean it will gain traction and work. As Christians, we have a responsibility to dream, plan, and act in faith believing... but we need first and foremost to get in step with what God is already doing and where He is leading. Good ideas and noble motives don’t necessarily result in success, or more importantly social & cultural change, and especially Spiritual transformation.
- c. D.L. Moody (1837-1899) – a great American preacher and evangelist and founder of the Moody Bible Institute.
 - i. Moody was an early supporter of the YMCA [the “Young Men’s Christian Association”] founded by a Noble Laureate.
 - ii. Although the YMCA ministry began nobly with the intent of allowing men a godly place to stay and study as they traveled, it decayed into more of a social gym today.
- d. A result of these Christian leaders thought helped shape the paradigm of ministry success – that initial ministry success will often degrade from blessing into a mere economic venture under the “Institutional Mindset.” Once the “Organization” emerges as the means to the ends, the “Organism” for which the organization was created to support progressively decays into the background. The organization then becomes the end itself instead of a means to an end. It is

paramount to maintain focus on the values that God desires, and to let outdated organizations to run their cycle into history when they no longer serve the purpose for which they were created.

- i. It is pretty much always difficult for the original visionaries to pass on their vision to the next generation and keep it fresh and evolving. If they try to fix the concepts on the past ways of action and vision, it will ultimately decay and fail... not unlike the Chrystal Cathedral ministry of Robert Schuler.
 - ii. So far, Franklin Graham seems to be reinventing the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and keeping the ministry fresh... but that is no indication it will continue beyond Franklin. So far YWAM [Youth With A Mission] has effectively reinvented itself, with bold internal changes that leaders expect to extend the life of the ministry for another 50 years. This has implications for all vested organizational ministries such as Campus Crusade, Young Life, Navigators, etc; not to mention denominational church organizations.
- e. Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) – was a key figure in the American Social Gospel movement.
- i. Considered to be the father of the “Social Gospel” – he placed great emphasis on works in acting charitably, morally and ethically to reform and redeem society.
 - ii. He was however, weak in his theology – he argued for justification by works rather than by faith. He took James at his word that your faith is worthless apart from good works.
 - iii. His teachings were more like moralistic slogans offered in gospel clothing – he completely overlooked the sin-nature problem of fallen humanity, and the world as a fallen sin-cursed creation that also needed redemption. He also overlooked that the organizational structures we create as a means to a noble end, often fail because they have no transformational redemptive value. He mistakenly thought the value of “helping people out” could lead to personal transformation. Unfortunately, it more often leads to personal dependence on the continuance of the help.
 - iv. Although he preached in “Christian speak” – using terms that evangelicals would understand [and respond to], he promulgated a secular humanist ethic. His thinking essentially focused on 90% social transformation, and 10% on God and Spirit.
 - v. He viewed Jesus as a social bridge, rather than the Messiah as the Spiritual Bridge who rendered atonement for humanity.
 - vi. He held to the ideal of humanity living in peace and virtue enacted by human action that ushered in social transformation as the means for perfecting humanity. He disconnected the means of the Spirit in personal transformation as God working in us to change our being into salt and light... being Christ like is having Jesus’ nature developed within by the activity of the Spirit, not merely doing stuff Jesus did.
3. Contemporary issues through which we may maximize the Church’s redemptive influence.
- a. Regional Conflicts:
 - i. Darfur, Sudan – the 1st decade of 2,000 AD has seen genocide as Muslims in Africa have pursued a course of “ethnic cleansing” of Christians. The north of Sudan is primarily

- Muslim, and the south is primarily Christian. The northern government has encouraged purging Christians, and the world has done little to condemn it or stem it. As Christians, how should we engage such brutal regimes and influence peace and safety for our Christian brothers and sisters? The matter is complex and has ramifications for other areas... it is not merely a black and white matter. What seems now to be occurring in Sudan, is a division of north from south... with Muslim and Christians divvying up the country by dominating regional control and likely becoming separate governments. China has a vested interest in the oil-rich north of Sudan, and they have veto power for any UN action that could change to dynamics there.
- ii. North Korea – Is another such area with a complicated political/social structure. The north being closely allied to China and being a communist dictatorship, with secular and atheistic values. The south being a democracy and largely Christian. Neither side trusts the other; both are convinced they are the rightful government for a reunified nation. China is backing the north, and the west is backing the south... an uneasy truce had emerged with a demilitarized zone separating the north from south. The same is likely to occur in Sudan. However, this is an uneasy truce as leadership ego and self-interest complicate any real progress toward unification.
 - iii. Pakistan/India and Russia/Chechnya are similarly separated nations with deep distrust and religious differences preventing unity. Catholic Ireland and Anglican England have found an uneasy peace after many years of conflict. So how do we expect things to work out in the Middle East? Russia has increasingly stoked the fires of conflict, while Middle Eastern nations negotiate in what appears to be bad faith... and people suffer.
 - iv. The question many Christians are asking is how to promote the Gospel – which brings peace with God and encourages for a respectful dialogue with others who don't believe as we do, or ascribe to the same values we ascribe to. Though the problem resurfaces perennially, the conflicts only gain traction at the demonization of the antagonist, or the merit of the protagonist. Neither is in the long term particularly helpful, instead respectful good-faith dialogue may allow for finding middle ground where real communication can occur. In the meantime, the social-political structures retrench, charismatic leaders seek control, self-interest and distrust of others dominates, and the people suffer.
- b. Homelessness and poverty:
- i. Jamaica – struggles with great poverty... and with unemployment at 50%, there are few opportunities for the poor. Family social structures break down as men father kids out of marriage and are known as “Baby Daddies” – they make the baby and leave the mother with the child. Children don't get to experience a healthy family environment where role models are demonstrated.

- ii. Haiti – is even worse than Jamaica before the earthquake that destroyed their capital Port Au Prince and devastated the country.
- iii. Mexico – has its tent cities/slums... as do much of the 3rd world. Upward mobility is nominal and the lure to easy money in the drug empires holds sway over a vast contingent.
- iv. Brazil and much of South America have inflationary economies that benefit the rich and subjugate the poor. Socialist and capitalist governments alike seem unable or unwilling to commit to structural help for their people.
- v. Hawaii – there is growing conflict between the white American and Japanese populations with the native Hawaiians. Because of the high price of real estate and housing, tent cities are popping up along the state beaches.
- vi. US inner cities – New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and most large metropolitan areas all struggle with homelessness and poverty. In the US there are 2 groups of people on the street –
 - 1. Type 1 – are the mentally ill, disenfranchised and social anarchists... they need services that engage them back into some mainstream system.
 - 2. Type 2 – are the drug and alcohol addicted who live on the streets by choice... they need something to break the addiction cycle.
 - 3. Communities are pouring millions and millions of dollars into the problem, only to see it grow. Real change seems elusive. Into such areas Christian organizations like “City Team” engage these souls where they live with the Gospel. Some break the cycle and find a fulfilling life beyond their dysfunction, most end up returning to the life they have known and are become comfortable with.
- c. The problem we face in maximizing the redemptive influence of the Church is to understand what sort of issues are at play and then strategically intervening. Coordinating among churches, similar ministries and resources, and local government is a key factor.

4. Contemporary Redemptive Ministries:

- a. International Justice Missions (IJM.org) is the fastest growing compassion based ministry in the world and they are acting on numerous planes simultaneously.
- b. If you had the opportunity to free someone from their suffering, what would you choose and who do you start with?
 - i. Knowing you can't force people to think differently and act accordingly, you can influence people to move in positive sequential directions... where incremental growth is measured in small steps rather than leaps.
 - ii. Start with those who are being forced against their will or those whose choices [usually small steps] have led them to where they are trapped in bondage.
 - iii. Choose to be a voice for those who have no voice. It is far too easy to marginalize and ignore those who are radically different and don't seem to want to change.

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- iv. Children and women sold into the sex trade is common in many poor countries. The long term damage of individuals amid an often brutal and destructive world view.
 - v. Christians should become an advocate for the weakest and most vulnerable in any society – the unborn. The battle zone is strewn with abortions, crack babies, children of addicts, etc. Without breaking the cycle, we generate a self-perpetuating class of lost people.
 - vi. Realize there is a worldly and spiritual dichotomy in all of these – interestingly the OT deal more with the worldly matters, and the NT with the spiritual. There is a profound link between the “Law” and the “Spirit” in each of these as well... the “give a hand up, not a hand out” of the OT has its place in the approach to deal with these issues.
- c. How much political involvement is appropriate for Christians? How does our theology and/or world view play out in these?
- i. Theological perspectives:
 - 1. Postmillennial theologians hold that Christians have an obligation to work to make the world better, to conquer it as a prerequisite for Jesus so He will return. They hold that He has entrusted Christians to take the Gospel to the world and disciple the nations to win it for Him before He will return.
 - 2. Amillennial theologians hold that Christians are making the world progressively better. Satan has been restrained and the world is moving toward Gospel domination. We can choose to join in the advancement or work against it.
 - 3. Premillennial theologians see things as getting progressively worse as we move along in redemptive history to the rapture/tribulation events before the Parousia.
 - a. Pre-rapture holds to Christ calling His faithful to join Him in the heavens before the tribulation begins, thereby saving them from the suffering of the world.
 - b. Mid-tribulation hold to Christ returning in the middle of the 7 year tribulation... the 1st 3½ years being Satan expressing his wrath on humanity, and the latter 3½ years being God’s wrath poured out on unbelieving humanity.
 - c. Post-rapture hold to the rapture not happening until the end of the tribulation before the destruction of evil.
 - 4. Each theological perspective sees their responsibility before God somewhat differently. For more on this topic see - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/1-biblical-literacy/Bible%20Survey%20-%20Apocalyptic%201.3%20-%20Eschatology,%20Millenianism%20&%20the%20Rapture.pdf>
 - ii. Should Christians become politically active; and if so how active? Here are some questions to consider:

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1. Should the conservative Republican Christian Right, or the Liberal Christian Left be preached from the pulpit? What role do pastor/preachers play in seeding social and political change?
 2. How do we choose who we vote for... should they be Christians only? Or the most qualified regardless of faith perspective?
 3. How does Jesus teaching of “rendering to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s” play into politics?
 4. Is there really a “separation of Church and State” in the US Constitution? The founding fathers argued that they wanted freedom to worship as they saw fit without the government forcing them to do one thing or another. It was never their intention that America would become a strictly secular state... it was presumed it would be a multi-denominational Christian state.
 5. Jim Wallace is a Christian political policy pundit... he suggests there are:
 - a. 2 spiritual choices – 1) there is one candidate who God has chosen, and we need to prayerfully elect them; 2) there is no specific candidate and we have complete freedom of choice... but it doesn’t really matter because whoever is voted in God will use according to His purposes.
 - b. 2 philosophical choices – 1) deal with limited topics that are focused on things Christians care about; or 2) deal with broad topics on the whole analysis of the larger environment we operate within.
- iii. We should ask ourselves – are the issues moral or ethical? What values underlie them... religious or secular? This is not something we normally think through, but how might it affect how we deal with:
1. Euthanasia – is life sacred or not? When does mercy mean ending suffering? Who has the right or responsibility to choose?
 2. Abortion – is life sacred or not? When does life begin... conception or delivery? Whose responsibility is it to defend the most vulnerable and helpless? Is there much doubt about what unprotected sex will result? For those who are “pro-choice” – when is the choice made?
 3. Capital punishment – is this criminal retribution, separation from society, paying your debt to society – how do these inter relate? Is the goal reinstatement into the mainstream society, or separation from it? Almost all agree incarceration alone is not the answer, but how do we promote redemption... and to what extent is it even possible? What about the rights of the victim? Who speaks for those the antagonists have silenced?

5. Gospel Centered Preaching:

- a. There is a difference between “Gospel Centered” and “Expository Biblical” Preaching:

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- i. Most seminaries focus on expository preaching as it tends to avoid theological conflicts. Theology, philosophy of ministry, and world view all flow together and reflect what we see as important, and how we address it... both in preaching and in motivating our actions. All effective preaching should in some way move us toward some action as a matter of thoughtful response.
- ii. What is the underlying core message? By being “Gospel Centered” we see the Gospel as the focus of everything we do. It becomes less about what I want, and more about what would God have us do to promote a redemptive approach to our social order.
- iii. Consider Romans 1:15 as an example:
 1. Being “eager to preach” ... note that the Gospel is the “Word” being preached.
 2. “Gospel” presumes a theological construct... because the Bible is Theological! Theo means God; and logical means reasoned study. Theology is the reasoned study of God... it’s a good thing!
 3. “Word” presumes contextual preaching... the “Word” being the entire Bible... all of the texts, not merely those “cherry-picked” to proof-text and make a point... usually the preacher’s point. Preach the whole Word.
 4. The “Gospel” being the heart of the Biblical story, which is couched in theological conclusions. Expose the point as a result of the Gospel.
 5. What is the relationship of the “Word” and the “Gospel”? How should I respond?
 - a. The Word points to the Gospel, but this is not the same as the Word equaling the Gospel.
 - b. If the Word equals the Gospel – then the message lacks power, because its underlying value flows out of the Law... which leads to condemnation and death.
 - c. If the Gospel points to Christ – then sanctification is pointing us to Christ within the power of the Spirit... which leads to deliverance and life.
- iv. Consider 1 Pet 1:23
 1. “Born anew” – is having the Good News preached to you. The power is in the message of the Gospel.
 2. Just because you are preaching “out of the Word” doesn’t mean you are preaching the Gospel... the two are different and preaching can be inclusive and exclusive of either.
- v. Consider 2 Tim 4:2
 1. Preaching in passion or fervor... is not necessarily Gospel centered.
 2. The focus here is on the preaching, not necessarily the Gospel.
 3. Ultimately, we can’t bring anything to the table or anyone to conviction, only the Spirit can accomplish that.
- vi. “Old School” – 3 step expository preaching

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1. Exposition of text with contextual, historical, and grammatical conceptualizations to develop the message.
 2. 1st let the message minister to you.
 3. Then apply it to the people you are preaching to.
- vii. “New Era” – adds a 4th step
1. What does the concept have to do with the Triumph of Christ? The Gospel is necessarily “Christocentric.”
- viii. Thoughts:
1. The overarching purpose must be the mission and triumph of Christ.
 2. The thematic developments always take off in the OT and land purposefully in the NT. Always link the OT theme with a NT application.
 3. Encourage people to live out their faith... their doing stuff doesn't save them, but their doing stuff because they've been engaged by the Spirit who is at work in them and through them is where the focus is on Christ who transforms everything.
 4. Every saint needs the Messiah for salvation – Jesus is not merely a replacement for YAWHEH, and the NC is not merely a replacement of the OC... it all points to Jesus.
 5. Inductive and deductive message development both relate theologically the same way... they land in Grace. They just use different approaches to get there.
 6. Recognize that the default mode of all religion is works. Most sermons focus on doing right or doing well... that is not necessarily bad, but it is not the ultimate good because it is not transformational. In David's life there is a clear progression the Law => led to contemplation => that resulted in condemnation => that encouraged repentance => that resulted in Grace... you cannot read Psalm 51 and not get this.
 7. The Gospel Triumph of Christ underlies everything. How do the faith lessons of the OT result in the coming and triumph of Jesus? Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David – are each developments of the progressive revelation of Grace that points to Messiah.
 8. To properly teach and preach, you need to understand what faith was like in the OT, only then can you properly preach the upgrade that the NT fundamentally is. Joel 2 and Ps 51 are both examples of the Spirit being revealed in the OT.
 9. If we teach the ethic of Christ but the empowerment of the Spirit is excluded, you are still in the OT Law... you are working in your own strength. This is not Grace, and it is well short of the Gospel.
 10. There is a connection of means, faith, self-esteem, content, and ethic – these are all important aspects of our inner-man. But the reason God loves us is the Cross of Christ – this is the ultimate demonstration of love.
 11. Faith is the primary means, but the cross is the vehicle.

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12. It is possible to make people feel guilty that they don't do enough, and you can make people feel good that they are doing something... but both fall short. This is not empowered preaching or teaching as it doesn't get people past themselves and into the Grace of God.
13. In the OT, love is an attribute of God... but it is linked with blessings and curses.
14. In the NT – love is proven in Christ on the cross... it is all blessings... as demonstrated in the Beatitudes Matthew 5:1-12. The offense of the cross is the power of the Gospel; the wonder of the Resurrection is the Hope of eternity.
15. Suffering doesn't mean that God hasn't blessed you. The upgrade of Grace surmounts suffering, and even makes it a blessing [James 1:2-4]... that makes no sense to an OT thinker.
16. Preaching the attributes of God is good and informational... but it is not transformational. All the attributes of God are displayed in Genesis... but that isn't the Gospel. Being part of Christ's triumph is like winning the lottery... you have won big and cannot lose.
17. In the OT – some people were supernaturally gifted... but in the NT everyone is supernaturally gifted.
18. OT faith was looking forward to something better to come.
19. NT faith is saying the something you waited for is here... and the new world coming is even better!
20. In Gospel Centered ministry – Christ isn't just our example, He is our triumph.
21. Reformed thinking – as defined by Martin Luther is justification by faith.
22. Gospel centered thinking – is justification by the cross, redemption by the Resurrection, sanctified by the Spirit and all personally received in faith.
23. The Character of God has not changed from the OT to the NT... the Grace of Christ is where the OT was always going but very few saw and understood that.
24. Our Hope is based on God's promise, exercised in Christ, and perfected in the Spirit. God's presence went from the temple, to a person, to each human heart... the closer and the most intimate connection possible.
25. Jesus changed the trajectory of Heaven and earth – redemption is on a totally new and complete order. It is not my self-worth or self-knowledge that matters; it is Jesus worth and the Spirit knowledge that changes everything... it is all in what Jesus accomplished. Since it is less about what I accomplish, and more the application of what Jesus accomplished; my role shifts to cooperating with God is already doing in me, and in my world.

For more on the Gospel Coalition see the following link - <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>

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This material was presented in the classroom by Dr Jeff Louie a member of the Gospel Coalition and theology professor at Western Seminary.