



INFILTRATE

THE GOSPEL IN LIFE

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A COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY MADE FOR, WRITTEN FOR AND
DESIGNED FOR UNION POINT CHURCH.
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INTRODUCTION

INFILTRATE: *To enter into, to gain access. To permeate or pass into.*

The second “Great War,” otherwise known as WWII, brings to light many names and faces associated with this incredible and tumultuous time. One name that does not fall rank and file with this list is Plucky Sonya Butt. Sonya, is described as a daring 19 year old British girl who had a great passion to enlist and assist in the defeat in the “axis of evil” lead by Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. Sonya found her way onto a battle field much more secretive and discrete then that of the frontline. During this period spy activity was on the rise and became a legitimate and effective way of doing battle against the opposition. Both sides engaged in attempts to INFILTRATE enemy camps in an effort to reveal vital information which would become advantage for the invading forces. This infiltration was carried out by many in the likes of Plucky Sonya Butt. Sonya would be activated and parachuted into France ahead of the Normandy beach invasion, otherwise known as the infamous D-day battle. Through her time there, she provided sensitive information that would aide in both the battle of D-Day and the ultimate defeat and demise of the “Axis of Evil” by the “Allied Forces.” Although Plucky Sonya Butt’s story has a minuscule similarity in comparison to what the Gospel does upon overturning our lives, she does provide some insight into how the Holy Spirit subverts the axis of evil lead by sin and satan who seeks to destroy our lives.

The Gospel is simply the revelation of God’s love poured out in and through Jesus for our behalf and benefit. This “Good News” of God’s redemption does not end on the cross but parachutes in the center of our lives, right amidst the battle across enemy lines. It is here the Holy Spirit permeates our lives with the truth of the Gospel. Often, unbeknownst to us, the gospel is there secretly invading our every thought and action as a means to reveal vital information leading to the demise of sin and death actively destroying our lives. This activity is not fueled by empty pursuit, nor seeking attempts to compromise with the enemy, but one of valiant vigilance empowered and equipped with the full grace, mercy and love of Jesus made alive inside of us. The mission of the gospel is not solely to INFILTRATE our lives in an effort to reveal weakness or plight of destruction, but is one that seeks to provide healing, restoration and transformation for our souls. It INFILTRATES our lives as a means to make us more like Jesus in every way, facet and area of our lives. It is propelled forward as the weapon for the kingdom of Jesus, to see His kingdom come in our lives and laid surrendered to His ultimate lordship and reign of grace.

The purpose of this study, “INFILTRATE,” is to scratch deeper and gain greater access into the areas of our lives that often give struggle and issue when trying to reconcile how the gospel should shape and form us in the likeness of Jesus. In the coming weeks we will unpack how the Gospel iINFILTRATES our *family, work, finances and neighborhoods*. Make no mistake, once the Gospel grips our lives, Jesus is at full work through the Holy Spirit. He is INFILTRATING our lives, permeating every inch, with the mission to drive out the enemy of sin and death replacing it with His likeness and love. Jesus will not stop until all of us is INFILTRATED with all of Him. So, lets pack the chute, jump aboard the plane and join Jesus on this spy mission to bring His light to enemy ground and tactics in our lives.



THE GOSPEL IN

HOME

PART I

THE HOME

MARRIAGE

EPHESIANS 5:22-33 (ESV)

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

ANALYZING THE PASSAGE

How does/should the Gospel infiltrate our marriages? The above passage is likely one of the most mis-quoted, loved-hated, ill-interpreted, and mis-construed in all of scripture. Because of this mishandling of the text, many have ideas of what they think Paul is referring to here, with little understanding or examination of what is being presented in the writings. The greatest hangup is often the word submit. You can imagine who has the greatest issue with this word; the ladies. On the other side of the isle, the men love to quote this verse yet completely ignore the reality that there is much more commanded of them in the entire passage than is the women. So looking at the reality and descriptive of the marriage relationship as a profound mystery, as Paul states, that is to shine the glory of God and provide a picture of His love, grace and compassion for His church, His bride, how are we to see our relationship with our spouse flourish in this way? How should the Gospel infiltrate our relationship in its entirety and align us with the ultimate will and purpose of God, reflecting His kingdom reign and order to the world around us?

GETTING CLOSE AND INFILTRATING

GIVING UP

5 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

LOVE AS CHRIST..... Having the love of Christ is merely impossible in the flesh. One cannot simply espouse the love of Jesus apart from knowing, receiving and being transformed continually by the love of Jesus personally. This means love is something that we simply don't just do, but it is something that becomes who we are through the grace filling of Jesus' Holy Spirit in us. So How do we move forward in love.

Love you wife as your own body, your own flesh.. This is Paul's comparison to the love shown and exposed in and through Jesus. He loved us more than Himself. He gave himself up for us. To see this love demonstrated in selfless is to choose against yourself in favor of your spouse. When is the last time you put their consideration ahead of yours? When is the last time you did something out of pure joyful sacrifice, choosing against your wishes and going all in favor of theirs? Going for something that was in their best interest but something made you vulnerable?

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Ephesians 5:31

LEAVING. Paul vividly reminds us of the command and dispensation of role and responsibility for the husband to the wife found in Genesis, with the union of Adam and Eve. The beauty here is the resemblance of how Jesus left His heavenly place, His father and came down to cleave to His creation; to His bride; to His church; to us His chosen. This idea of leaving father and mother should signify the allegiance that is experienced in the cleaving. To cleave is to grab onto, to hold onto for dear life. To not let go.

In seeing how Jesus has held onto us in His grace, how should we hold onto our spouse? In times of trial, turmoil, arguments and heartache, how should we cleave to the other? If you place stipulations on the other, a "If you then I" what implications does this bring? Does it resemble the Gospel? Does it resemble Jesus' love for us?

ONE FLESH... Just as Jesus has united himself with us in our flesh, He has made His home in us through the outpouring of His spirit, our relationship with our spouse should be in like manner. Generally speaking Jesus in you is far more piercing and revealing. He knows the depths of your heart, sin and disobedience and yet still chooses to love and live in you, to have relationship, to give salvation.

So looking through that lens, what are the depths of cultivation in this oneness with your spouse? What should be the unity of the relationship?

To experience this unification one thing must be certain, both are filled with the Holy Spirit, their lives must be captivated by grace, and submission to Jesus happening continually. After this,

what are some real and practical ways to see this process begin? Have you hidden apart of yourself from the others inspection? If so why?

When our marriages operate as one flesh what would be seen before the world? Who would be identified as reigning in our lives? How would the gospel draw people in through this unifying love and devotion? How does your relationship point people to Jesus? If not in a relationship, how would you desire your future relationship be? What would that look like, and how can you move towards that today right where you are?

that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5:27

WASHING WHITE.... Have you ever helped another person clean themselves? Maybe it has been your child, a sibling or parent who has had a time of disability where they could not. Everything about this process is far different than just caring for ones self. It involves a lot of inspection, care, gentleness, humility and grace. Sometimes dealing with one another can be like dealing with yet another stinky diaper. The last thing you want to do is to handle it yet again but you do so because you care so deeply for the other. Now husbands this by no means is a derogatory projection of how you should view your wife, but it is one we should each consider for the other. There will be times in our relationship where we are helping one another through difficulty and sin. It will be messy, but amidst this messiness there should be found a great deal of washing through encouragement. How does one encourage and help bring purity? Paul answers this, *“having cleansed her by the washing of the water with the word.”*

Lets examine the husbands first. Often husbands are the quickest to tear down verbally, to respond condescendingly and to lack grace. Husbands, how do you respond to your wife? Paul is clear that this washing and purity will happen only through our submission to the Word of God. Is our response with consideration of the word? Or is it more often out of anger or frustration? How can you encourage both your wife and the open discourse that must take place to produce growth? Jesus' response to us is always gentle and with care providing room for expression. How do you resemble this?

Wives, how do you respond to your husbands? When they fall short or do not live up to the standard you think they should, how do you treat them? Does your response change? What are the things about them you seek to build up and point out for recognition? Jesus hold no contempt towards us when we fail time and

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Ephesians 5:22-24

Selfless love garners respect; selfish love demands unmerited respect.

Submission is to simply live humble before another. This is not a theme meant for only wives, or women in general, but for all people under the Lordship of Jesus. In this passage we clearly see that the wife is to submit to the leading of the Husband as the head of the home. Now this is not to lend power to those who seek to abuse their spouse in any way. Paul is not saying that wives should submit to everything the husband would say or try to have them do. What is conveyed in this passage is the reality that the man should be leading in a manner that is Christ-like. His conduct should resemble his savior and His life should be filled with His love and grace. Now, if this is what is the case, wives are called to submit. Why should they? Because the man has demonstrated a persona and character that is respectable and acceptable. Men if you do not lead your family well, as you are submitted before and to Christ, you can forget anyone bestowing on you the respect you so deeply deserve. Respect will not be found nor given to one playing the part of the armchair quarter back yelling out all the orders and calling the shots alone. This will only push the family away. Rather our leadership in the home should reflect the leadership we follow in Jesus. As Paul says, imitate me as I imitate Christ.

So men, how often are you yelling plays from the comfort of your chair expecting everyone to be at your beck and call? How are you actively pursuing relationship with your wife? With your family? Carefully reflecting and examining your life and heart, would you be someone you would want to follow if you were them? Do you treat them as though they are your own body?

Wives, how do you show respect and humility before your husband? Are you as graceful as Jesus, building your husband up through encouragement and not tearing him down in constant critique? Jesus had no reason to humble himself before His creation, but He did so in an effort to redeem us, his created ones. What are the ways you can see the Gospel reap a harvest in your relationship with your husband?

CHILDREN

EPHESIANS 6:1-4 (ESV)

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

ANALYZING THE PASSAGE

We may do a disservice when disconnecting the relationship we have with our spouse from the relationship we have with our kids. However, here we battle in this idea yet again of the one flesh. Out of the relationship we have with our spouse flows life or death extending to the remainder of the family, especially our kids. Like the relationship between the Father and the son, our life will and should overflow into the life of our children. If we are serious about discipleship, why don't we develop a serious understanding, consideration and approach in how we raise our children with Gospel centered focus in the home and family?

GETTING CLOSE AND INFILTRATING

Honor...

Honor means to have high respect or esteem. Paul encourages the reality in chapter 6:2. It follows the favored part of the parents, “children obey your parents.” We love to remind our kids of this truth and quickly give the explanation as to why they should obey, “that they may live long in the land.” However, we easily skip over the duality of the word honor. Honor is both given and received, not commanded but proven and earned by the one who is honored. So as parents, we desire the honor and respect of our kids, but do we live in the honor of Christ, empowered by His spirit before our kids?

Out of the marital relationship will flow the honor of the children. Yes they are sinners, and have bent hearts, so they will rebel. But often their response is built based on how we treat one another in the marriage relationship. We honor Jesus because of how much he has honored us. He held us in such a high esteem that He gave Himself up for us. So how do you honor your children? Do you highly esteem them? No we are not talking about giving them everything they want, but giving them everything of who you are?

In the discipline of Jesus we see that He does not give us everything we want. In fact he give us everything we need and often what we need is a good correction. The old saying goes “spare the rod and spoil the child.” Now this is not to take frustration out on your child through a flogging by your hand. Rather, discipline is apart of giving what is needed. Like us kids honor those who espouse and live out what they are asking others round them to live. We have a word for it, we call it inspirational. Often the best gift we can give our kids is to live the life in front of them, doing what we ourselves call them to do. How does your life match with what

you ask of them? Do you treat them like sons and daughters of the king, or do we treat them as though they are our servants?

Discipline and Instruction....

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Dads; yes yet again you are being addressed and called out. There is one thing for sure, in general, most women have no problems giving and showing love, and the other is they have no issue providing nurturing. There are some cases where this is not true, so we don't want to broad brush, but in most cases it is us, the men that have to be reminded of these truths.

"Do not provoke to anger"

Literally the word "provoke" means to cause an arousal over a response or something unwelcomed.

For many of us dads, we have experienced provocation in our lives and this is more often than not, the from which we draw from whether cognizant of it or not. What we generally focus in on in the passage is the children response. They are angry. But we give little attention to the provocation; the root cause. How to you handle situations with your children? Do you treat them as if they are stupid or dumb for not having knowledge privy to your experience? Do you talk down to them rather than humbly engaging them?

Dads, it is not simply our responsibility to tell our kids what to do, but to teach them. To bring them up in the instruction of the Lord. If you bring one up it means you have meaningful relationship with them. You model and exemplify before them what you are calling them to become like. Discipline is the root word for Disciple. You are discipling your kids. What are you discipling them towards? The instruction of the Lord? Satisfaction of the flesh?

What does your relationship convey about God's desire for relationship with us, to your kids? Taking an honest hard look into how you treat your children, what would they determine about their heavenly father, and how He feels about them? How does your fatherly model size up with Jesus' life and model?



THE GOSPEL IN

WORK

PART II

WORK

Genesis 2:15-16 (ESV) 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,

ANALYZING THE PASSAGE

Contrary to many ideas and understandings, people assume that we were created to lush, relaxation; a lifetime of nothingness, just self gratification. Merely to sit back and enjoy ourselves and all our desires. This is nothing of the truth and If it were then one of the seven listed sins would not be slothfulness. For many, the thought of grandeur is to simply live an existence of doing nothing but what one wants. But this is living for self and not God. It is against the grain of Paul's words to deny self. We see in the above passage that in the beginning God created us with purpose. Purpose to reflect His glory accomplished through and in our work. In fact we see that God is not idol, but an active creator. One that imagines and works to bring them forth from "ex nihilo" meaning from nothing.

We see this purpose transposed on His creation; onto us. Moses records that God put man in the garden, one of great harvest, a harvest produced not by sweat of the brow nor the breaking of ones back, but one of provision from the Lord. The man's responsibility and work? To keep it. To tend it. To work it. The word keep means to guard, to maintain order. Think about it this way. God placed His created man into His created garden and purposed him to work for His divine order keeping it according to His will and design. He gave man dominion, some control to exercise his God enabled gifting according to Gods enabled purpose. We were made to operate in Gods kingdom order in the world He created. As we venture into how the Gospel unpacks into our work, think about how you approach your work? Does it demonstrate the kingdom reign of God to others around you?

GETTING CLOSE AND INFILTRATING

GOD AT WORK....

Genesis 1:1 (ESV)

*In the beginning, **GOD CREATED** the heavens and the earth. (emphasis added)*

The word "create" means to bring into existence or to produce. God produced, by the work of His hand, this world and everything in it. He looked at His work and it was good. Seeing God as creator, and we made likened in His image, how does this change your perspective on your work? Seeing God actively bringing things together to produce, how does this move you to see new purpose in your work?

Romans 8:28 (ESV)

*And we know that for those who love **GOD ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER** for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (emphasis added)*

This verse is often misused and ill interpreted as those who truly love God will experience good things. However, this is not what is implied by Paul. What is implied is that God is always at work, bringing forth His purpose amidst His now fallen creation. We as believers and followers of Jesus are now aligned with His good work being completed in His time. It is greater assurance that God is not aloof, but working among us to His will and way.

If God is not aloof and always at work then how should we see our work through this lens? Does our work align with his? Does the illustrious desire to be rid of work convince you to rest on your laurels and fail to see God's kingdom reign function in and through your work?

Knowing that our God works, and has created us to work, how does this give you assurance and comfort when you experience times of hardship amidst your work? This hardship was not created by God, but produced by the fall of man. The sweat of the brow is a result of the sin of man. However, amidst the beading sweat and toil of the ground there is the original intent of work, it is redeemed through and in Jesus. What assurance do you have in knowing that God is there with you amidst your work? Amidst the toil and sweat?

IT IS GOOD....

31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, **IT WAS GOOD.** (Genesis 1:31ESV)

The word "Good" is literally translated as, "approved of." God, after having created everything, breathing it into existence and assembling each part and piece with a purpose, Moses says he look at it and approved of the work, the product. He saw that it was Good. God has created each of us for work that produces good in this world. Work that shines His glory amidst this fallen creation. Although we are ultimately fallen beings, through the empowerment of Jesus' spirit in us we can find ourselves acknowledging that the work we do is "good" and brings glory.

How often do you look at your work, no matter how seemingly important or insignificant, as a ways and means to bring God glory? How often do you see your production as a way that others will make a determination on this God you serve?

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)

Paul writes here a reminder of how our lives should always be fully revealing the reality of God in this world.

In Jesus' life we see that the Father was well pleased in His Son. *"and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."* (Matthew 3:17 ESV)

Does our work, our job, our profession, our parenting, everything we do bring the approval of the Lord? Would he look at how we pursue his pleasure among along else in everything we do?

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, (Colossians 3:23 ESV)
In your work are you more distracted by men than your captivated by God?

Notice Paul does not say the work that you were called to, but rather “whatever you do.” Our calling is not always as much to a place or professional position as it is to a spiritual posture. WE are often more concerned with how God should change our position or place of work more than we are how our posture before him in the midst of where we are planted should change. How have you been specifically placed to where God can shine through you in your place like he could not in anyone else?

JESUS WORKED.....

Mark 6:3 (ESV)

3 IS THIS NOT THE CARPENTER, *the son of Mary and brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” (emphasis added)*

One of the most overlooked realities when considering and thinking through Jesus’ physical existence on earth is that He was born to a working family. The cultural context of the day lends much to this idea and thought. It would have been custom in an apprentice society for the father of a specific trade or business to raise his sons in the profession. The son would have been groomed to one day take the business and continue on the legacy. Jesus was born to Joseph who was a carpenter. He would have worked and trained under his father stead. After all the ministry of Jesus did not fully begin until he was in His early 30’s. So with this understanding we would see him completing every day tasks as many of us are accustomed to.

See that Jesus, our redeemer, the Son of God was active in a working world, how does this change your perspective?

Knowing that He was sent for a purpose and that purpose being fulfilled in God’s timing, there was certainly a desire to get things moving. Jesus was, after all , in the form of man, in the flesh having experienced everything we do, yet not sinning. So knowing this, there had to arise frustration. After every common of Joseph, after that one more stone to fabricate, or the one more project to do, I am sure Jesus felt the stress of wanting to move beyond and see the next step. Yet, He as in the garden surrendered to the will of the father. “Not my will but yours be done” Luke 22:42.

Processing through this how does it help you to see the redemption of where you are in your work? How does it help you see that Jesus is there helping you not just make it through your current work, but to thrive to the glory of God?

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15 ESV)

IT IS FINISHED....

In Scripture we see two places that God completed His work. First in Genesis 2 then followed by John 19. First God has completed His creation, He has pronounced it is good, then He rests on the seventh day. Second is Jesus. He has walked the hard long road to the cross, been beaten and crucified and there in the midst of His redemptive work He declares it is finished, minutes before His passing. In both of these seemingly in comparable events, we see one common truth. God finishes what He begins. His creation, He finishes. His redemptive work in Jesus? Completed.

My grandfather had a phrase he commonly employed and commanded before his employees as a guide to a greater finished work. “*Start right, stay right, finish right.*” Now, we understand how imperfect we are and that the grace of Jesus is constantly making us new, giving us a new place from which to start from amidst our sin and fallenness. However, what I want to pull from this reality is that there is a start, middle and end to all of our work. Do we start with the end in mind? Are we so compelled by that finishing force seen on the cross, experienced and felt in our lives, that our work is finished in the way we first began?

One of the hardest things for me to learn was to finish what I started. I left loose ends everywhere. Why? Because I love to start stuff, and when I began to get board I just moved on to another start. Many of us approach our work lives in this manner. When we are tired of a job we quit and move to the next one. But what if God wants us to hang in there?

Often we see little effects of Jesus’ redemption in our lives work because redemptive work takes time. What if our works completion, how we finish shines clearly the vigilance of God’s pursuit of man? How we finish may say more about Jesus and His work than we account for. How do you finish?

Finally, our work should be accompanied by rest. Once we say, "it is finished," whether the project, a step, or the day, we should leave seeking rest. God himself demonstrates this in how He created then rested on the seventh day. It was more commonly known as the sabbath. In this likeness, man was to rest. To quit His striving. To say, I am finished for the day. How do you find rest? Do you take the time to quit striving and remain in Jesus? What if your rest communicates more to others than you know? What if your rest says more about the One who is in control than it does how careless others may perceive you as?



THE GOSPEL IN

FINANCES

PART III

FINANCES

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein (Psalms 24:1 ESV)

ANALYZING THE PASSAGE

The second king of Israel, King David, is considered the author and psalmist of Psalm 24:1. Something David understood was that all is the Lords. David had been but a shepherd, one far from any line of kingdom authority, not even of the line of Saul the first king of Israel. Everything in his life had been but a gift of the Lord, directly from His sovereign reign and order. Even amidst Davids rule God had proven that all was His and came from His provision. David had a new testament understanding amidst an old testament backdrop.

Today we live in the New covenant life through Jesus. In Jesus, God withheld nothing from His creation. When we were but enemies with God, there He gave the most precious gift of Heaven; His Son. Seeing this clearly though the lens of grace opens us up to realizing that our possessions, money and finances are not the rulers of our lives, but simply tools for kingdom expansion. If God withheld nothing from us, and gave us everything, then nothing we have should be withheld from Him because He has so freely given and blessed us in the face of our brokenness. When the Gospel moves from our heart to our wallet we find the release from idols, from false Gods, false promises and false hope. When the Gospel moves from our heart to our wallets we find that everything God gives us is above and beyond what was already given in Jesus. He owes us nothing, yet has given everything, and it is this reality that moves us to loosen our grip and loosen our hearts to His kingdom work. A kingdom work that seeks to see lives rescued by the gospel, saved from sin, saved to new life and set free to abound in His glory.

GETTING CLOSE AND INFILTRATING

FROM HIS HAND...

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19 ESV)

In writing a letter to his beloved church, a people who had learned how Jesus' generous love affected their entire possessions, he reminds them continually that God would supply them with every need, in the richness of Jesus' glory. Remember Paul is writing from a position of imprisonment. So looking from Paul's perspective an outpouring of "physical blessing" seems a distant reality. However, Paul has laser focus on where provision comes from, and how we are supplied in it even beyond our physical condition.

What are some of your needs you feel God has forgotten? Are they needs or wants? Many times we may spend more of our focus on being concerned with things that we feel we need to improve life, rather than the things that are truly needed for life. If all true life flows in and through Jesus than where should our focus be?

Matthew's Gospel records for us Jesus' words to satan as He is tempted over food. Something we all would see as a true need. Jesus reply's, "but it is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Here we see that even the most seemingly needed things can often be used to distract us from where life is found. Jesus points us to the reality that God alone sustains life. So where do you look to for sustenance of life? How are the appetites of your life controlled? If not from, by and through God than how can they appear? How can they begin to consume you? Reflect back to satan's propositions and ploy found there in Matthew 4.

"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32 ESV)

In the above verse, found in one of the most powerful places of Scripture, Paul points us to the truth that God has given everything in His son Jesus. The very treasure of heaven given on behalf of sinners. Seeing this reality, how does this demonstrate the affections and care of God for His created man? How does this bring Him in close to your personal areas of so thought need? Does this present a God who is aloof, far off or distant from where you are?

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Matthew 6:25-29 ESV)

As apart of His sermon on the mount, Jesus paints a word picture of the extent of Gods provision, care and grace given to His creation. In this He combats the anxiety that plagues our lives due to our pursuit of filling "needs." In this Jesus lists things we would consider extremely important to existence. Food, clothing and water; basic necessities. However, Jesus says be not worried about these things. Do not seek these things first. His solution, seek first the kingdom and all else will be added to you.

Here is the question, do we see the kingdom first with our life? Are as concerned with the advance of the Gospel, people coming to know Jesus around us, and His kingdom made incarnate in and through us? Or do we let the other stuff, even those basic necessities, get in the way?

From His hand flows all things, and all provision can be seen through the cross.

LOOSED GRIPS LOOSED HEARTS....

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5 ESV)

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:21

Our hearts are the controlling mechanism behind all of our life. Jesus points this out, as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, that where ones treasure is so is their heart. So the natural reaction is to grab for that we consider of great value, great treasure. When we grip tightly to things we are restricted to the ways of which God would lead and guide our lives. He no longer is the prominent voice of direction to our lives, but is then placed in a competitive conversation. One thing is for sure, God will not share our affection, He desires our complete and utter devotion. Why? Well, everything Jesus has accomplished on our behalf, His lavish outpouring of love and grace on all humanity. All these things make Him worthy of our life's surrender and affection. When we loosen the grips of other things desire of our heart the we begin to find our hearts loosed to fully love God and others.

In the area of your finances, do you have control over the tool, or are you a slave to the control of the tool?

Do you spend more time trying to find ways to serve your wallet, serve the furtherance of more money, possessions and the expansion of your own name and kingdom, or does the Gospel and kingdom of God have permeate your perspective and heart? How have you counseled the Lord on how you should handle His provision in your life? Is that even a question on your radar?

Lets get this straight, money, possessions, these things are not inherently evil. They, in and of themselves are not our problem. Our problem is our hearts faith and hope placed in them. The Author of Hebrews writes, be content with what you have. Why? He finishes, because Jesus will never leave nor forsake you. Everything that will ever complete you or bring you fulfillment and satisfaction is in the full work of Jesus. So where do you attempt to find your identity? Is it in the finished work of Jesus, or is it in the things of this world and the status they may or may not bring?

RADICAL GENEROSITY...

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47 ESV).

There is like no other verse used more frequently these day to demonstrate the way the body of Christ, the Church, should look other than the end of Acts 2. In this passage we see the binging of how the Holy Spirit radically transforms a people with the kingdom mind of Jesus. In the above passages we see a people complete loosed from the chains of self and unleashed to radical generosity in the move of the kingdom. In light of the truth that Jesus gave everything for us, for our freedom, than everything we have can only be seen as open to His guidance and direction. To give in whatever way He so desires.

So getting personal now, what are the ways what Jesus has done for and in you has infiltrated the way you express your thankfulness with your finances? How do you view generosity? Is it a way to appease God, to get Him off your back? Or do you view generosity as a way in which the full measure of grace poured out for us in Jesus is demonstrated to others around you?

What if the level of your generosity revealed the level of your thankfulness?

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Many churches still present giving like it is a 10% requirement. As though the Old testament law for the Jews exists in the same capacity today under the new covenant. This is not so. The tides have changed and the tables have turned. Because Jesus has infiltrated our world and lives with His presence, His lordship reign desires access to all that He has died for. All of us, we are His kingdom territory and He has paid for it with His royal blood. So while 10% is a great place to start, the percentage is not what God is after, it is the root of your heart. Paul points to this in the above verse. Give as he has decided in his heart. Yes whatever Jesus has asked of you, that is the requirement. It has nothing to do with the amount given but everything to do with the heart behind it.

So in your generosity, are you moved to simply just get by? Or are you allowing Jesus to have access into how much you consider giving?

Often establishing standards, like the 10% does help us to have a base from which to work, but often it can easily convince us that 10% is all we need to be concerned with. When we give it then we are done and brush off what else Jesus may want to do in and through us. So do

you approach generosity as a means of fulfilling the percentage? or are you moved to seek more of Jesus' mind?

In the passage found in Corinthians Paul says, "don't give under compulsion." Where have you seen this encouraged? If you give under compulsion or guilt, is that really giving towards what Jesus desires? Is that responding to His voice or others?

Paul says give cheerfully, because God loves a cheerful giver. So where does the cheer come from? What is the motivation? It is to just do a good deed so you can feel better about yourself? Is it because you want others to hear of your good deeds and celebrate you? Or is it because you are so overly moved and consumed with joy at what Jesus has accomplished for you?

Giving, generosity wars against our selfish nature. it frees us from self and to God. So do you war against self? Do you have so much debt you can rarely give? If you are in extreme debt than you are not a slave to God but to the lender. What are the areas you need to turn over to Jesus' reign so He can bring release and control over you hearts root?



THE GOSPEL IN

NEIGHBORHOOD

PART IV

NEIGHBORHOOD

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27 ESV)

ANALYZING THE PASSAGE

The above passage was Jesus’ directed response of the Pharisee’s question, “how does one inherit eternal life?” Jesus’ direction of the question to this passage was not by fluke, but would reveal the heart of the one asking the question. Hidden inside of this passage is the truth behind the gospel. Our love for others, even those we deem as unworthy or have a hard time living with, demonstrates and reveals the level of love and grace we have received and experienced in Jesus. If we say we love God, then our love for people should reveal His love in us. *“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1John 4:20).*

Jesus’ love for us was demonstrated in the giving of His life for our sins, to bring us into relationship with God. His life given for us demonstrated the depths of God’s love for us. Those we live with and around are considered our neighbors. Jesus’ message to the Pharisee through the parable of the “Good Samaritan” gives us great heed. Those we would consider our enemies are in fact, through the fullness of the Gospel brought in close and made our neighbors, our friends, the very heart of God. So, neighbor is quite the all-incompassing word. Every person in our reach, sight, community and world is considered to be those in whom we seek to make disciples of, and making disciples is more about how we demonstrate Jesus’ love and grace through our lives, rather than what we can do to someone. So, how do you demonstrate the “good news” to your neighborhood? To your perceived enemy?

GETTING CLOSE AND INFILTRATING

EVERYONE IS A NEIGHBOR.....

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:6 ESV)

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (Romans 5:10 ESV).

Enemies; you heard it right. When we were but enemies with God we were reconciled. As stated earlier Jesus presented a tough character to receive to the Jews when asked who is one’s neighbor. Luke records for us what we know as the parable of the Good Samaritan. This is in response to a religious lawyer’s question, “who is my neighbor?” Samaritans were hated by the Jews. They considered them half-breeds and merely a garbage of a people. They were hated as enemies.

Yet these, that were so looked

INFILTRATE 
THE GOSPEL IN LIFE

down on by the Jews, are the

very ones Jesus uses to describe what a true loving neighbor looks like. It was the epic of reconciliation. The Gospel brings foe and friend alike together through the grace of Jesus' redemption of His creation.

Who are your neighbors? Who are those around you, those you have contact with daily that could be impacted by Jesus' love and grace extended through?

Who are your enemies? Who are those you have deemed way outside the reach of God and really more so, out of your good graces? How is God calling you to be an extension of His redemption?

Seeing your standing with God, apart from Jesus, how does the reality of Jesus' reconciliation move your heart and life?

How does this reconciliation change the way you see yourself? The way you see your neighbor? The way you see your enemy? To whom much is given much is required, how much Grace has redeemed you? How much grace is required of you to give others?

LOVE IS A VERB....

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (James 1:22-25 ESV)

In the parable of the good Samaritan, it is evident to us that the Samaritan proves to be a true neighbor because of, not his prayers over the man as he continued on his way, not pity he showed in just merely thinking of the man, but how he stopped, got down and lifted the man up. He acted in favor of the man that was beaten and left for dead. He put himself in great harms way because if possible marauders were around this could be a trap for the next person to stop. Yet here is the Samaritan disregarding this idea of self preservation for the ultimate preservation of another. It is clear to us that Love is a verb. Love brings us to do for others, not merely pay lip service to it. The whole central piece of the Gospel is how Jesus acted on our behalf. He demonstrated the love of the father for us in the way He came to save us. So how do you view your neighborhood through this gospel lens? What is our role as ambassadors of the kingdom and Gospel?

Seeing this, how do you love you neighbors? Your community? What are some of the ways you have heard or seen others in need and have failed to engage?

Have you played the part of the Levite or the priest?

Who are those around you that are within your reach? Who are those in your neighborhood who have experienced deep hurt, pain and suffering and your simple presence with them could provide a pathway to healing?

Do you even know your neighbors? Those who live beside you? Do you stop from your life to enter into theirs? Jesus stepped out of Glory to come down for us. How does this play out in the way you are an extension of redemption in your community?

Have you simply been an acknowledger of God's Word and never really stepped back to see how much of its truths have soaked in and resonate from within your own life and living? Do you wait for someone else to come along and engage others around you or do you intentionally engage and live out God's command to love your neighbor?

NO FEAR.....

18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot[a] love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:18-21 ESV)

One of the fears in the parable of the "Good Samaritan," is that the whole endeavor could lead way to a trap. It was not uncommon for thieves and robbers along this passage road to beat up travelers and leave them as decoys to lure other unsuspecting helpers into their ultimate plan of plunder. Certainly this thought was on the priest and Levites mind. They did have places to go and things that seemed important, but we could dare say that these individuals allowed a fear for their own life to hold them back from engaging with another in need. With Jesus we see

perfect love relentlessly and courageously leveraged and lived out for a creation that had become enemies of God, at odds with their creator. Jesus' love stepped out in what would to many seem great risk and a great fear. In our minds the what if's would swirl. However, Jesus is sent with all confidence of the father motivated by His full love for His creation. This is what it looks like when the Gospel infiltrates our activities with others. We consider others as valuable as our selves . This idea thrusts us into seeing that fear of another only holds us back from seeing God's love and grace being extended to others. It is at the core of the Gospels call, living out reconciliation.

In what ways do you have fear of becoming more open to those you live around, or share physical space with? What are some ways Jesus would be involved with others around him?

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You may feel that you neighbors are non responsive or are likely not interested in having you get to know them. But what if it is you that are more overly concerned with your own life and miss opportunities to be an extension of Gods' grace to them? If you are honest with yourself, how intentional are you getting to know those you live around?

Often we are fearful of others motives. Maybe it is the neighbor who always seems to pry in your business. Possibly it is the one who seems to always have something to market or sale you on. Whatever it may be, How can the gospel and living its truths overcome and cut through those fears? How would Jesus see each person?

Lets be honest, it is far easier to not involve ourselves in the matters of others. Things seem to be less complicated. We can carry on with our lives without any interruptions. This is how the priest and the Levite looked at the beaten up man on the road. He was at best a distraction to their lives. Besides, he was likely dead anyway. Is this how we see our neighbors? Do we look at them as distractions to our lives? Do we think that possibly they do not care about the good news we carry, so we just write them off as probable deaths? Looking from the outside of our lives, how could we read the parable of our involvement with others? Would it look like the Samaritan? Or the Levite and priest?

CONCLUSION

How the gospel infiltrates our lives is quite a daunting thought and task to unpack. What we hope you have received from this study is a fair assessment of how your life has responded to Jesus' call to go and make disciples. In a grand part it is not as much about having another list of things to do as much as it is about the reasons behind what we do. Our hearts matter, and until our heart is all consumed with the love and grace of Jesus, simply changing our actions will fall short. The Gospel will infiltrate all of us when we are consumed with all of Jesus. When He fills our hearts our lives priorities and focus are transformed. We no longer live for ourselves but see every aspect of our lives as a means to Jesus' ultimate end. As we stated in the intro, "Make no mistake, once the Gospel grips our lives, Jesus is at full work through the Holy Spirit. He is INFILTRATING our lives, permeating every inch, with the mission to drive out the enemy of sin and death replacing it with His likeness and love."

How is the Gospel INFILTRATING your life? How are others experiencing the incarnate presence of God in and through you? How has Jesus completely gripped your heart and life? Jesus will not stop until all of us is INFILTRATED with all of Him.