



LIFE AS MISSION
Joy of the Mission
Week 9

Opening prayer

Prayer for the persecuted church:

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brother Kasey Crawford and Elevation Church.

Closing prayer

Introduction:

The Apostle Paul never married, never had a family, but he certainly had the emotions of a parent. He treated all the people he led to the

Lord like they were his children. Listen to what he says to the Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

¹⁹ For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.

That's how most parents think of their children. They're our glory and joy. And most parents will admit that parenting is hard... but

the joys outweigh the difficulties. The same can be said of the joy of engaging in the Great Commission. It is difficult. The same way that we train our children to know the Lord and hope and pray that our efforts have not been in vain and that they sincerely follow Him when they leave the nest, the same can be said of engaging in the Great Commission. It has very much in common with parenting.

But wonderful parents and wonderful evangelists when they tell us their stories have the same effect — they discourage us.

Because we are not them. And we'll never be them. But we all want to be the best parents and best evangelists that we can be with the giftings that God has given us.

Maybe we become discouraged when we only look to the results rather than to the relationships. So, today we're focusing on the joy of the mission, but we're looking at it from the lens of the relationships. And the Apostle John is going to help us with that.

1 John 1:1-8

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the

Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

John is writing things that benefit Christians. So, why does he end this little section with the idea that writing this will make the joy of the Apostle's complete?

1. The gospel brings joy to relationships.

The gospel deepens relationships. And deeper relationships bring greater joy to our lives. Now, realize this is true of both the Christian and nonChristian relationships in your life. You are a better friend to your nonChristian friends than many people in their lives.

John says that he writes these things so that you can have fellowship with him and other Christians, but you can only have relationship with them if you have relationship with Jesus and the Father. In other words, to truly have

relational joy with people in our lives we have to know and believe the gospel.

There is a common grace that all people enjoy in close relationships, but Christians experience a deeper relationship with each other that others simply do not. And that has to do with the common bond of having the same Holy Spirit indwelling us.

But here's the thing, the fact that the gospel brings joy to relationships is not just a motivation to share the gospel. It is a

motivation to use to intrigue people with the gospel.

In other words, we can ask someone, “Have you ever considered this about your relationship issues? That there is a spiritual component that is actually the most vital component? So if you’re missing that, the relationship will always have a missing component.”

The gospel brings joy to relationships, because it repairs broken relationships. The

gospel heals relationships, even those of Christians.

Now, in what ways does the gospel bring joy to relationships?

1 John 1:5

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

2. The gospel brings truth to relationships.

Truth is a good thing for relationships. And the gospel is about Truth. Truth is a good thing for your life. And the most important truth everyone needs is spiritual truth.

And here's my "yeah, but..." moment. Yeah, but why do so many people think that scientific truth is knowable, but spiritual truth is not?

I was reading an article about the invention of the Ouija board and in the article the writer said, “Science knows that the Ouija board does not put people in contact with the immaterial.”

Now, I ask quite simply, “How does science know that? Because that’s quite amazing if that’s true.” Science can tell me what’s in the spiritual realm? Really?

I bring this up because that mindset is prevalent in our culture. Science in popular

culture is presented simply as facts. It's not presented in all its theoretical complexity that is ever-changing. That's why people can get away with saying such ludicrous things as, "Science knows we cannot communicate with the immaterial." Science can prove no such thing.

Biblical truth is the most solid guide you'll find regarding human behavior because it's based upon God's revelation of how He wants relationships to work. Truth helps

relationships, especially when we know it's God's truth.

Another way the gospel brings joy to relationships is...

3. The gospel brings spiritual light to relationships.

1 John 1:6

⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

If you have a relationship with someone in whom there is no darkness at all, meaning no moral imperfections whatsoever, then it will be hard for you to maintain a true and honest relationship with this person if you yourself practice immorality.

Let's break this down for the true Christian and the false Christian.

For the true Christian, this doesn't mean you never sin. This is about consistency of life.

Because you are born again you want to walk in the truth. You want to do God's will, so you seek it out.

How do we do that? We find God's will right here (in the Bible). We learn how to love God and be better neighbors. Because we're learning how to do that it means we're not doing it perfectly, so we're always repenting, we're always turning away from something less true toward something more true. All I mean by that is that we're always adjusting our thoughts and our behavior to conform to

the will of God. That's what it means to live a life of repentance.

For the false Christian, this means you know the will of God in many of these matters. You know that sex before marriage is a sin. You know that the Bible teaches that Jesus is the only means of salvation for anyone. Yet, you also know that deep in your heart, even though you say you believe in Jesus, you don't really subscribe to these particular teachings. You engage in sex outside of

marriage. You believe Jesus is your Savior, but other religions work for other people, etc.

The point is, and this could be drawn out, further, you do not walk in the truth as God has revealed Himself, the salvation He has provided in Christ and His Word.

In short, you lie and do not practice the truth. You lie to yourself. This is how you can believe you're saved while going directly against the Word of God. You believe all the parts you

agree with and explain away all the parts you don't agree with. That's self-deception.

It's a troubling statement, but it just might be true that false Christians do more harm to the cause of the gospel than any other type of human being.

1 John 1:7

⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another,

and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

4. The joy of Christian fellowship is based in the gospel.

Fellowship based upon the gospel means that we know the truth about ourselves. This should make us more gracious toward others. It doesn't always, does it?

And here is the two-edged sword of Christian fellowship. When your brother offends you somehow, you feel he should have been more gracious to you and so you are hurt. Even after he apologizes, the nature of relationship with him changes because he hurt you. So, here you are hurt because you thought he should have been more gracious from the outset and you can't seem to bring yourself to exercise the grace you feel he should have exercised from the beginning.

Now, is that not the truth about how we often function? When Proverbs says it's nearly impossible to regain the friendship of an offended brother or sister, Solomon is telling the truth.

Yet, imagine how these things would fair without the gospel in our lives.

If someone says you have sinned against her, then just take it at face value that you have. That's not to say there aren't two sides to the story, but many relational wrongs are

perceived wrongs. It's best to understand that you probably contributed to the wrong. Maybe not in the way it was perceived, but just by being sinners we hurt each other. It's completely humbling.

Relational maturity is always a sign of gospel understanding.

The joy of Christian fellowship is based upon two things — walking honestly before God, others and yourself. Two, resting in the gospel.

Resting in the gospel is the only way you can move forward when someone you've apologized to doesn't seem to forgive you. Resting in the gospel is the only way you can move forward when you know you have failed God and those you love. Resting in the gospel heals and restores relationships.

Rest is what the gospel offers those who are weary and downcast in their relationships. So, if you know someone who is weary and

downcast in a relationship, see if she's open to what the gospel has to say about it.

Now, what do I mean by resting in the gospel?

1 John 1:8-10

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not

sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

- Faith precedes fruit
- The Joy of the mission is being able to help someone who has relationship issues see that the source of their issues is actually her own estranged relationship with Almighty God. All our relationship issues are tied to our relationship with the Lord.

GOSPEL REMINDER: If the Thessalonians were the joy and glory of Paul, how do you

think Christ felt about them? And if He felt that about the Thessalonians, He feels no less for you.

GREAT COMMISSION ACTION STEP: Look for an opportunity this week to tell a nonbeliever how the gospel has improved a relationship of yours.