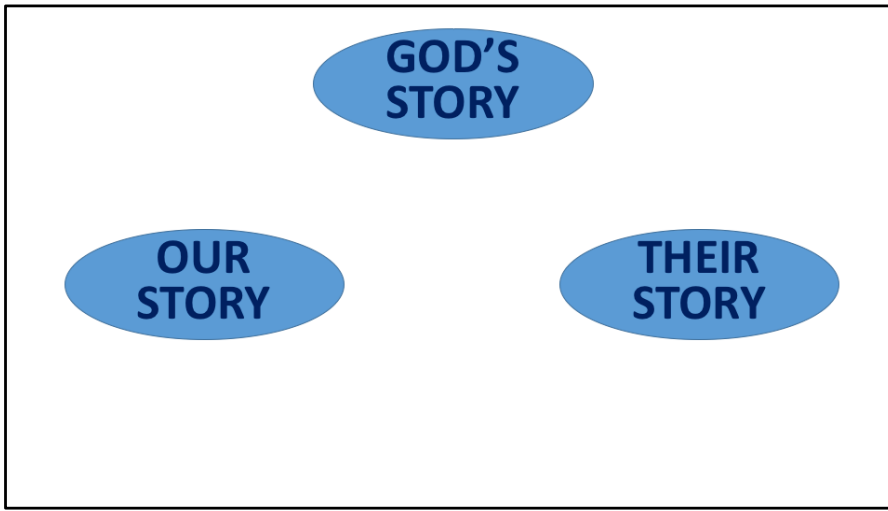




The rule of the day is, at work and school, and just about everywhere else, “Don’t offend anyone!”
-- Sometimes we imagine that there is some way to follow Jesus and not offend anyone else.

TR: This Fall we’ve been learning about Gospel Influence.



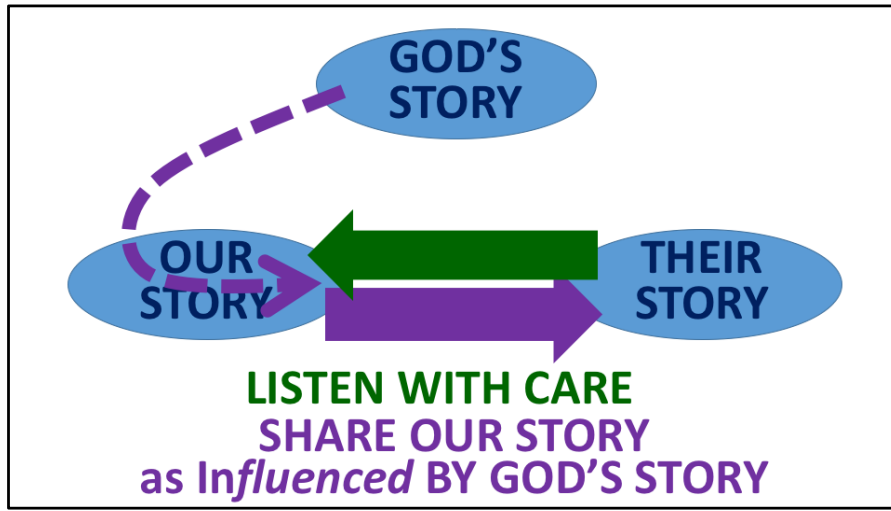
Our hope has been to learn to connect three stories together as witnesses for Christ.

-- We know that it can be very offensive just to blast God's story at others,

-- . . . and in our post-Christian nation, we know it is not usually effective.

TR: So, in our small groups, we've learned and been practicing .

..



... to be prayerfully intentional about ...

-- listening with care,

-- and then sharing our story of how we've been influenced by God's story.

-- We are not sales people, nor an attorney of any kind for God.

-- We are call to be witnesses who truly love others.

TR: We've taken hold of the fact that ...

**WE MUST FIRST BE
GOSPEL *influenced***

**...
TO BE
A GOSPEL *influence***

... READ SLIDE

-- This helps us to not be hypocrites.

-- It doesn't help to give a testimonial of a product that you don't use.

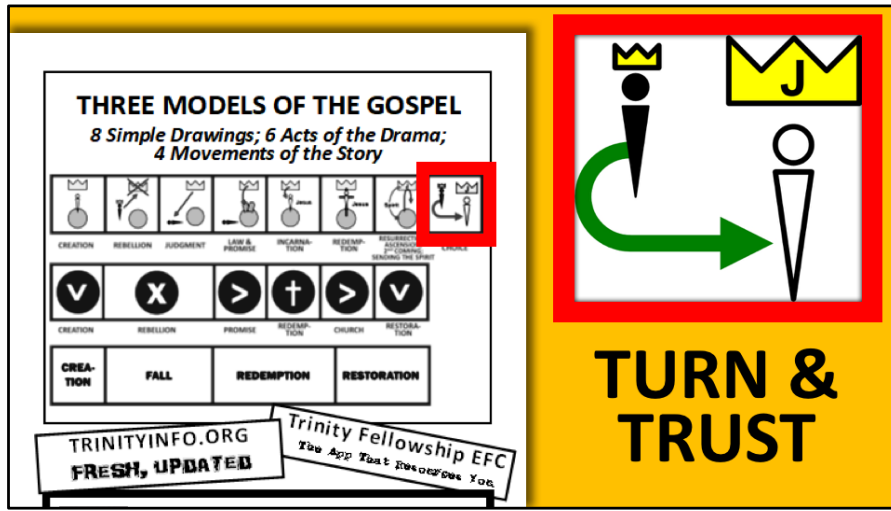
TR: So, being influenced first, we are learning about being Gospel influences on our families, friends, co-workers, school mates, AND we can imagine . . .



. . . that now we can share the good news of Jesus without offending anyone.

-- The apostle Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah when he speaks of "beautiful feet."

TR: Today, I want us to receive a corrective warning, if indeed we imagine that there is indeed some way to be a Christ follower and not offend anyone.



The offense shows up in only one of the three models we've learned.

- Though the call for a response is implied in the 6 Acts or the 4 Movements, it is only explicit in the 8 Simple Drawings.
- The last drawing shows us that while salvation is God's Work, it still remains our choice.
- We must choose to turn and trust.
- To use more common biblical language, to repent and believe.
- There really are only two ways to live. With the crown on our heads or to remove our crown and come under the crown of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

TR: There is an unavoidable offense in sharing God's story of the good news, also called the Gospel.

(10:14-17)

People of *INfluence* have
beautiful feet,
but they **cannot**
“obey the gospel” for others.

Turning to the book of Romans, p 1089, we find out that . . .

READ SLIDE

- We shouldn't say anyone's "NO" for them . . .
- . . . but, neither can we say anyone's "YES."

TR: That's because we must “obey the gospel” . . . see Romans 1:5 . . .

. . . through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about **the obedience of faith** for the sake of his name among all the nations,

ESV

**As Paul describes his ministry, he says . . . READ SLIDE
-- faith is not in contradiction to obedience, nor obedience to faith.
-- but, responding to the gospel requires the obedience of faith.**

TR: Let's move to where we will focus for today, a few pages to the right, in Romans 9 and 10.

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

ESV

Here is a call to stretch out the arm of witness, to be people of beautiful feet, to be gospel fluent . . .

-- READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 15

And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶But they have **not all obeyed the gospel**. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Clearly we must be intentionally focused "From the Church Out" (one of our core values)
- But, the gospel must be obeyed not just understood.
- It must be believed. To do that it must be heard. To do that someone must speak it.
- And, considering all the peoples of the world, for someone to speak it, they must be sent out.
- BUT, we cannot obey the gospel for others.

TR: Verse 17 concludes this section . . .

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: God calls us to have beautiful feet and bring the good news to others . . .

(10:14-17)

People of *INfluence* have
beautiful feet,
but they **cannot**
“obey the gospel” for others.

. . . but, we **CANNOT** obey for them.

-- And because of that requirement of making a choice, the gospel will always be offensive, in some measure.

TR: Go back with me to the last paragraph of Romans 9 and see

. . .

There will always be the offense of the . . .
**(9:30-33) STUMBLING BLOCK OF
JESUS**

. . . READ SLIDE

TR: From the text . . .

Romans 9:30-31 p. 1047

What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.

ESV

READ SLIDE

- In Romans 9-11, Paul is addressing the question of what happened to God's plan for Israel.
- Sometimes I imagine that he is looking into the hearts of the Christians at Rome and seeing their concern about God giving up on Israel and therefore there is the chance that someday He'd give up on them.
- But, that is not what God has done. He has sent Christ, as the fulfillment of the Law.
- Most of Israel pursued the law like they were able to keep it and therefore be declared righteous in God's sight.

TR: This did not lead to righteousness . . . verse 32 . . .

Romans 9:32-33 p. 1047

Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. **They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,** ³³as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and **a rock of offense;** and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- We cannot pursue righteousness by works but only by faith, believing in him, the stone of stumbling.

TR: Jesus Himself said to John the Baptist as he languished in prison, ultimately to have his head severed.



**“And
blessed is
the one
who is not
offended
by me.”**

-Jesus
to John the Baptist in jail

READ SLIDE

TR: Paul will repeat this same idea in speaking to the church at Corinth . . .

. . . but we preach Christ crucified, **a stumbling block** to Jews and **folly** to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

ESV

READ SLIDE

- The Messiah crucified, hung on a tree, cursed . . . that is a stumbling block and a folly to those who will not believe.
- But, to those who respond in faith, Jesus is the power and wisdom of God.

TR: Making clear that there is an unavoidable offense in the gospel does not mean we shouldn't avoid what is avoidable.

“REASON FOR THE HOPE”

ARE
IN
YOU

*IN*tentional Training
for being *IN* our communities
as Gospel *IN*fluences,
reaching both hearts and heads.

One Day Intensive Training

Saturday, November 18
9:30 pm — 3:00 pm

That’s one of the reasons why I’m offering a one day intensive training that will help you clear away “avoidable” offenses in folks’ hearts and heads.

TR: No amount of study will remove all the offense of the gospel. There will always be the offense of . . .

There will always be the offense of the . . .

**(9:30-33) STUMBLING BLOCK OF
JESUS**

**(10:1-4) SUBMISSION TO GOD'S
RIGHTEOUSNESS**

READ SLIDE

- If there is a dirty word in our culture, it is submission. We rebel at the notion that we should submit to anyone.
- But the obedience of faith, as Paul called it, requires the humbling of ourselves and the willingness to submit.

TR: From Romans 10, we read . . .

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Paul's heart is for the Jews, his fellow Israelites.
- Many of them were zealous for God but not according to the knowledge of the gospel truth.
- Being zealous and sincere is not enough. Being spiritual is not the same as being declared righteous in God's sight.

TR: Verse 3 . . .

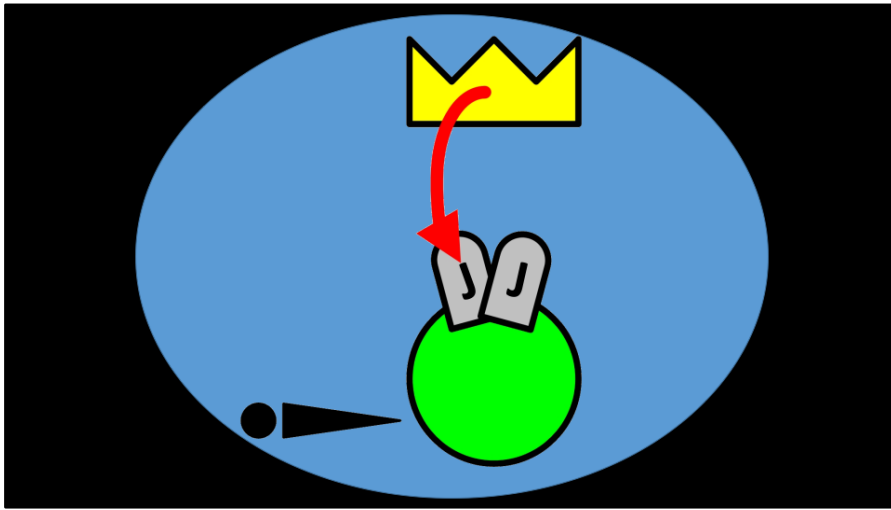
For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, **they did not submit to God's righteousness.** ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- The number one heresy is all the world is that we can establish our own righteousness.

TR: The fourth of the 8 Simple Drawings . . .



- . . . captured the biblical truth that the Law from God was a good gift BUT it did not have the power to give us life.**
- Remember, the Bible doesn't just say that our sin makes us a little sick or weak . . . we are "dead in our trespasses."**
 - We imagine that the promise of the free gift of salvation through Christ would be so fantastic that everyone would "submit to God's righteousness."**
 - YET, even those who profess faith often betray that they believe they somehow have earned some of or at least deserve more than others the salvation freely given.**
 - If not betrayed in arrogance, it is betrayed in the way we respond to suffering and to duty. "I don't deserve this!"**

TR: We try to remove the unnecessary hindrances as we connect God's story, our story, and their story . . . but there will

always be some offense . . .

There will always be the offense of the . . .

(9:30-33) STUMBLING BLOCK OF JESUS

(10:1-4) SUBMISSION TO GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

(10:5-13) SIMPLICITY OF THE OBEDIENCE

READ SLIDE

-- When Paul said to the Corinthians that the gospel was "folly" to the Gentiles, it was because it was too simple.

TR: Read in Romans 10, beginning in verse 5 . . .

For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- If we want righteousness based on the law, we need to keep all the commandments . . . perfectly.

TR: Verse 6

But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷"or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: The righteousness based on faith, that God is calling us to submit to, doesn't require us to . . .



**. . . ascend some staircase of works to heaven OR to go down,
descending into the abyss.**

TR: Verse 8

Romans 10:8-9 p. 1047

But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹because, **if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Right now you can submit to God's righteousness.
- You can obey the gospel, exercising the obedience of faith.
- HOW? By confessing – agreeing with God that Jesus is Who He said He is
- By believing that He was raised from the dead and thereby acknowledging that He is the One Who forgives sins and bestows righteousness.

TR: We do this in our hearts . . . not our emotions, but the seat of government of our lives, as verse 10 continues . . .

For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 12

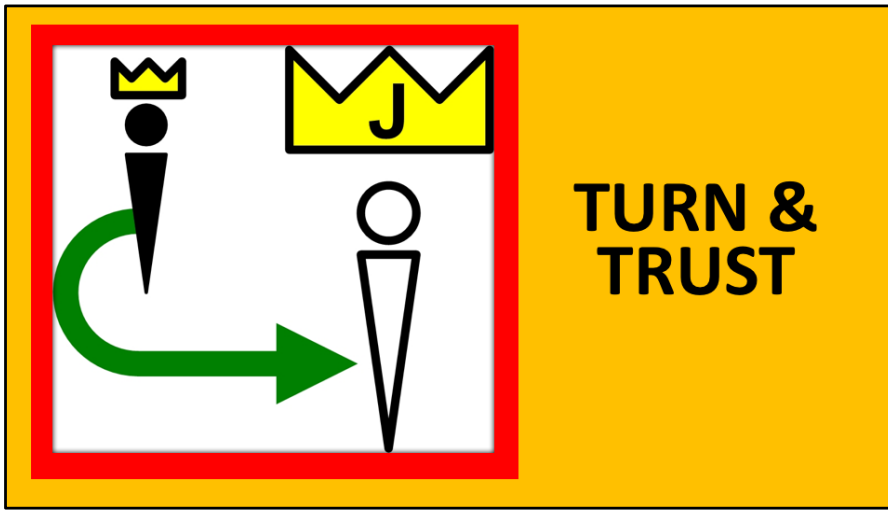
For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Everyone who believes will not be put to shame.
- Everyone who believes will be saved.
- That “everyone” includes you, no matter what your heritage or background.
- It doesn’t matter if you are a Jew, a Greek, or anything else.
- God wants to freely bestow His riches on you . . . if you call on Him.

TR: Why would it be offensive to invite folks to . . .



. . . turn and trust

-- To repent of being the Lord of their own lives, trying to be zealous enough to do what they believe is “good enough” to get to heaven.

-- Virtually every cartoon about St. Peter and the pearly gates involves him asking questions like, “Have you led a clean life?”

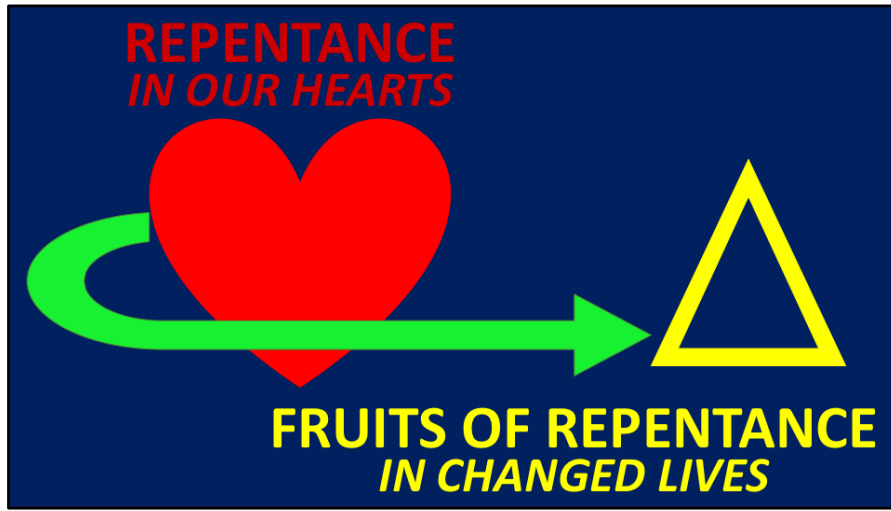
-- But that is exactly what the Jews imagined would be enough, trying to establish a righteousness of their own.

TR: It is not enough to just . . .



. . . raise our hand. We must actually repent and believe.
-- People are not saved by just hearing the gospel, no matter how winsomely it is done.
-- People must make the active, personal choice to turn away from their sin in their hearts and put their trust in the person and work of Jesus.

TR: It is super simple to do, as we just read in Romans. We must confess and believe. And it makes such a radical change that we can know it has happened by looking at our lives.



**Repentance is not a work because it is a turning of the heart.
-- But, true repentance always will yield the fruits of
repentance, over time, in changed lives.**

**TR: As we seek to be gospel fluent with folks, I rejoice to hear
stories of your initiative . . . your prayerful intentionality.**

People of *INfluence*
clear away all **avoidable** hindrances



And I love how you are working hard to clear away all avoidable hindrances . . .
-- through listening with care and serving, while building relationships, you aren't creating other stumbling blocks for folks.

TR: Yet, we must take courage and know that we cannot remove all the offense of the cross and still be faithful to it.

People of *INfluence*
clear away all **avoidable** hindrances

AND

make **clear** that a decision
of reasonable faith is required.

We must be willing to make clear that a decision of reasonable faith is required.

-- We cannot water down Jesus' words of REPENT and BELIEVE.

-- We don't want to pressure folks but we do want to make clear that they must actively and intentionally choose.

TR: In Proverbs we are told . . .

**Rescue those who are
being taken away to death;
hold back those who are
stumbling to the slaughter.**

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Story of a high school student dying of cancer . . . “Yes.”
- Story of another man . . . “I signed and dated.”
- I often tell folks they don’t need to decide now, and that doing so only for me is silly.
- Don’t make your children pray a prayer that they do not mean . . . it will only inoculate them to the faith.
- The decisions of children are real . . . and they last because at new birth in Christ the dead are made alive.
- If you made a childhood decision and right now you have no desire to walk with Christ, it is doubtful that you made the decision of turn and trust, repent and believe.
- If you made that decision, you should want to confess that

**with your mouth and proclaim it through public baptism,
even as folks have done today.**

TR: As we seek to . . .

**WIN
&
GROW**
DISCIPLES
WHO SHOW ALLEGIANCE TO
JESUS

. . . READ SLIDE

-- will you commit to being a person who clears away all avoidable hindrances AND still makes clear that a decision of reasonable faith is required?

-- The old illustration still holds: wheelbarrow across Niagara Falls. Do you believe? Will you get in?