



3 CIRCLES

Turning everyday conversations into gospel conversations

“The Gospel”

Idea: The gospel allows us to recover and pursue God’s design for our lives and help others do the same.

Intro: The last couple of Sundays we’ve been working through a series entitled *3 Circles*. We’ve been reminded that God has left us with a mission to make disciples of all nations...all peoples. We are to tell people the good news that God made a way for them to live the way they were designed to live. Over these three Sundays we are learning a relational and conversational way to bring them the help they need through the gospel of Jesus.

We have been commanded to go to those who are outside the relationship with God for which they were created. The Bible says that they are dead in their trespasses and sins and are under the wrath of holy God (Eph 2:1-3). The task before us is massive. The North American Mission Board (NAMB) estimates that of the 359 million people living in the US and Canada, 269 million of them are without a personal relationship with Christ. That means 75% of the people are lost and headed to a devil’s hell. There are 1.26 million people in metro-Richmond. If 75% are lost, that means there are

945,000 lost people in the metro area. Our own county has a population of approximately 30,000, so there is an estimated 22,500 people who are dead in trespasses and sins living right around us.

How do we reach them? If our strategy is to hope we can attract them to our church, then we have already failed. There are 33 churches that I know of in the county. If each church averaged 500 every Sunday, 50% of the population would still be unchurched and unreached. If we want to turn back the lostness in North America and our county, we must personally take Jesus' final command seriously. We need to stop talking about faster addition and start considering strategies for multiplication.

How do we make a dent in such overwhelming numbers? If Powhatan is 75% lost, what will it take to move our county from 75% lost to 74% lost this year? It means that we need to make 225 new disciples this next year. If as a church we are relying upon the pastors to make that many new disciples in one year, it'll never happen. There is no way that your pastor can disciple 225 people in one year. In fact there's no way that the rest of our elders and staff can disciple 225 people this next year. The numbers are too great to overcome. But if every disciple in the church (approximately 150) becomes a disciple-maker and leads two people to Christ and trains them to be a disciple-maker, there would be nearly 300 new disciples in Powhatan next year. Those 300 would join the 150 of us (450) to make 900 new disciples the following year. Those 1,350 disciples would make 2,700 new disciples in year three. The result would be 4,050 disciples in just three years if every believer in our church led just two people to faith and disciplined them each year. The result would be an 18% decrease of lostness in Powhatan in three short years. In year four if those 4,050 disciples made two disciples each, the result would be 8,100 new disciples for a total of 12,150 disciples, decreasing the lostness of Powhatan by 54%. In year five those 12,150 disciples making two new disciples each would result in 24,300 new disciples for a total of 36,450 disciples made through the

ministry of RLBC. In five years we would decrease the lostness in Powhatan by 162%. We can do this, and we must do this. How? First, we must pray.

Prayer focus: We have given you a 3 Circles prayer card. One side of the card reads, “Far from God people in my life.” The other side has 3 Circles drawn on it. In just a moment I will walk us through how to use the 3 Circles to explain the gospel to someone. The side with blank lines is for you to write down the names of five people you know who are far from God. This is a way for you to commit to intentionally pray for those people to come to faith in Jesus. It is also a way for you to intentionally pray for opportunities to turn everyday conversations into gospel conversations. It is God the Spirit who draws people to Jesus, God the Son. So take this card and put it in a place where you’ll be reminded to pray for the far from God people in your life each day.

To tackle this enormous task Jesus has given us, we first pray, but next we have to see ourselves as outposts of God’s kingdom. We are God’s representatives living in enemy territory. The statistics prove that we are living in enemy territory. There are more who don’t believe than those of us who do believe. So our homes have to be gospel outposts in our neighborhoods. Our desks have to be gospel outposts in our schools or offices. We have to be gospel outposts when we’re out and about in the community—at the grocery store, the ballpark, and the gym.

Inquiry: We’re going through a conversational, relational way to carry out Jesus’ mission for us as we go about our daily lives. The first week we talked about God’s design for our lives, which is evident from the very beginning. We reviewed how God created everything and it was good. Mankind is the pinnacle of His creation, and we were made for relationship with God and each other. God’s design is for us to “walk and talk” with Him just like Adam and Eve once did. However, Adam and Eve departed from God’s design. They wanted to do it their way instead of God’s way. The Bible calls this sin

and tells us that we have all sinned and fall short of God's perfect design. Sin leads to brokenness. We all know how brokenness feels. It feels like broken relationships, addiction, depression, discouragement, fear, guilt and shame. We all want out of brokenness, so we try to fix it (squiggly lines out of brokenness). We medicate it with drugs or numb it with alcohol. We strive to be better people, hoping that somehow, someday, our good will outweigh our bad. We look for ways to alleviate our pain. When we do that, we just get more and more broken. This feels like a bad thing, but in many ways brokenness is a good thing because it's the way God gets our attention. When we feel broken on the inside and everything's all messed up, we know something needs to change. This is where we get some really good news. The good news is that God made a way out of our brokenness.

The term the Bible uses when talking about this good news is word *gospel*. Lets look at the gospel in order to better understand it and how it impacts our mission.

1. God made a way out of our brokenness.

When Adam rebelled against God and His Word, his relationship with God was severed. The intimacy Adam once enjoyed ceased as he and Eve hid in the bushes. On that day the two of them died spiritually. But God...He made a way where there was no way. In Genesis 3:14 God curses the serpent for his participation in the fall of Adam. In God's declaration to the serpent, He promised that a man would "bruise" the enemy's head. Read Genesis 3:15.

This statement is the first of many prophecies to be fulfilled by Jesus Christ. He was the offspring who would crush the enemy even as the enemy is bruising His heel.

The gospel story in Adam and Eve's life did not end there. Read Genesis 3:21. God took what I believe

were lambs and slaughtered them. He made garments for the man and woman from the hide of the animals. This is the protoevangelium or “first gospel.” This act foreshadowed the sacrificial system instituted by Moses and ultimately foreshadowed the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. – Heb 9:22

God made a way out of our brokenness by shedding His own blood for us. God did this because He loves us (John 3:16). The Bible teaches that in love God sent His one and only Son to shed His blood and cover sin once and for all (Heb 10:10-14).

2. The gospel is simply: Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and God the Father raised Him from the dead.

Read 1 Cor 15:1-4.

The Bible says in Romans 6:23 that the payment for our sin is death. It is both a physical and a spiritual death. The good news is that Jesus died in our place (Rom 5:8). He offered Himself up as a perfect and holy sacrifice on the cross. It was there that the sins of every person were placed on Jesus, and the Father exhausted His holy wrath against the Son as He bore our sin (1 Pet 2:24). Jesus died physically. He also experienced in that moment the Father forsaking Him. Jesus’ body was placed in a tomb. For three days Jesus was dead, but on the third day He rose. The Father resurrected the Son to die no more. The resurrection finalized the work on the cross. Jesus’ death on the cross paid the penalty for our sin. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead overcame the curse of death brought on by sin.

21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

– 1 Cor 15:21-22

This is the gospel...the good news. And it is the gospel alone that saves us from our sins (Rom 1:16). How does this happen?

3. We just have to repent and believe the gospel.

15 and saying, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*

– Mark 1:15

Repent means to change direction. It means that we turn from our sin and self and turn to Jesus. We recognize the destruction that sin has caused, so we choose to forsake it and receive the free gift of grace offered to us by Jesus. In doing so we believe the gospel that Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead in order to purchase our redemption.

Most people have a difficult time believing that Jesus would do all that for them. They have a hard time grasping that kind of love. They rather think that Jesus is out to condemn them. The truth is Jesus doesn't want to condemn us. He doesn't have to do that because your sin already has. In our sin we are condemned already (Gen 3; John 3:17-21). Jesus went to the cross because He loves us and desires to know us. He went to the cross not to condemn but to redeem. All we have to do to receive His free gift of salvation is repent of our sin and believe the gospel.

When we repent and believe, we come into relationship with God.

4. God helps us recover and pursue His design for our

lives.

When we come into relationship with Jesus our hearts are changed. He removes our heart of stone and gives us a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). We now have a spiritual sensitivity that we didn't have before because Jesus indwells and empowers us.

Jesus restores us to the way we were supposed to be. He reconciles and repairs our brokenness (2 Cor 5:17-21). He makes us new.

Then, as a new man or woman in Christ, we become God's ambassadors to a broken world.

Conclusion: We want every resident in our communities, county, state, and nation to have repeated opportunities to hear and respond to the gospel. We want to see the 75% who are lost reduced significantly. That's why we're teaching a conversational way to share the gospel. That is why we're offering more in-depth training on Sunday evenings in September and October. We want to begin to turn our everyday conversations into gospel conversations.

It begins with prayer, praying for the far from God people in our lives. And as we pray their hearts will be softened. Likewise, our spiritual sensitivity and desire to share the gospel will increase. Then we share the gospel with those who are far from God. And finally, we train the ones who put their faith in Jesus to share the gospel and disciple others.

This is the mission of every Christian and the mission of every church. Lets get it done.