

Gospel Fluency

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Gospel Growth

Speaking the TRUTH in Love IN Ministry

In Ephesians 4:11-16, we are instructed about the means by which the Church grows up into maturity. God gives certain people to the church to equip all believers for ministry (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers). Then as each part is doing their job, they build up the body of Christ to maturity and the stature of the fullness of Christ. Paul goes on to describe what must take place for this growth to occur:

1. Speaking the Truth in Love – The truth is found in the person and work of Jesus. Jesus said, *“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”*. So, speaking the truth in love is another way of saying – *“Speak the Gospel to one another.”*
2. In Ministry (and on mission) – The way in which the body is built up is through each part ministering to the others (v. 16). It is in ministry and on mission that we become aware of where each of us is need of being built up in the Gospel. The areas of deficiency in our belief in the Gospel show up when we are called to Love Others and Makes Disciples.

Therefore, in order to grow up in Christ and help others grow up in Christ, we need to be Gospel Fluent and call people to live lives that both demand the power of the Gospel and reveal where we are not living in the truth of the Gospel

FOR DISCUSSION

How have you grown in Gospel Fluency? What has been most effective in shaping you to be able to “Bring the Gospel to Bear” on issues in your life and others?

How have you shaped your group to be Gospel Fluent? What have you found to be most effective in equipping your Missional Community to speak the truth in love to one another and prepare them to share with those who don't yet believe?

Creating a Culture

In order to effectively equip your missional community in Gospel Fluency, you will need to create a culture where it is normal to speak the Gospel to each other regularly. Every sin and issue that stands in the way of our faithfulness to Jesus' commands is ultimately a Gospel issue, since sin is the outcome of unbelief in Jesus (John 16:9). One of your key jobs will be to equip your people to KNOW the Gospel, APPLY it to all of life and SPEAK it to each other.

It Starts With You

Shaping a Gospel Fluent Culture starts with you being regularly shaped by the truth of the Gospel. This means you have to KNOW it and APPLY it to everyday stuff, while asking others to SPEAK it into your life.

Do you know the Gospel? Could you articulate it? Can you address everyday issues with the Gospel?

If you know it and can articulate it, the next question is: ***Are you experiencing ongoing repentance and growing faith in the Gospel?***

This will look like you *“taking every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ”*. It means you are regularly checking your motives, beliefs, attitudes and actions to see if they reflect faith in Jesus or faith in someone or something else. This includes inviting others to have the freedom to speak openly into your life as well.

Then, when it is apparent that your faith is in something other than Jesus and what he accomplished for you through his life, death and resurrection, you need to be reminded how the Gospel shows Jesus to be the sufficient one for you in that issue, repent of unbelief and put your faith for that thing in Jesus and his sufficiency.

The more you are actively applying the Gospel to all of life, the more normal it will become to both speak of it and to equip others in it.

Lead Your Group Into Gospel-Centered Life

You will need to lead in Gospel engagement in a variety of ways in order to make Gospel conversations normative for your life together and your mission to make disciples of others. There are several ways you can make Gospel conversations more normative, but below are few suggestions to start with:

1. Rehearse the Gospel Regularly

Ask your group to regularly restate the elements of the Gospel out loud together to see how well they're getting it. You may have to lay it out for them a couple of times until they begin to remember it.

Here are three questions I ask to help people remember...

Who is Jesus?

- He is the perfect man who lived a perfect life fully submitted to God the Father in all things
- He is the God-Man who is God in the flesh so that we could know what God is like and God would be near us
- He is the Messiah sent by God to save us from our sin, death and destruction

What Did Jesus Do?

- On the cross, He exchanged his perfect obedience (His righteousness) for our sin so that those who have faith in Jesus get Jesus' righteousness credited to their account and their sin credited to His account
- When he died on the cross not only were my sins removed, but they were paid for (atoned for)
- He rose from the dead to show his power over sin and death (the wages of sin is death so Jesus' resurrection shows the debt is paid in full)
- He ascended to the right hand of God the Father from where he sent His Spirit to bring faith and new life to us, empowering us to live lives of obedience

What Must We Do?

- Repent – Have a change of mind about who is God around here
- Believe – By faith put our trust in Who Jesus Is and What He Has done, believing it was accomplished for us
- Be Baptized – Publicly express our faith that our lives are now united and identified with God in Christ

What Happens to Us?

- We are forgiven and cleansed of our sins
- We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit
- We are included in the forever Family of God
- We are commissioned to Make Disciples of Jesus

2. Apply the Gospel to Personal Stories

Give each person in your Missional Community the opportunity to share their personal story. Before they do so, encourage them to tell it in light of what they believe about Jesus and how the Gospel has affected all of life. Also, encourage the group to listen with “Gospel Ears” paying close attention to areas where the Gospel has redeemed and rightly informed their story as well as where the Gospel needs to be spoken into their Story.

For example, if their story recounts a life without a father present or maybe a life with an abusive father, listen for where they came to see that they have a perfect Heavenly Father who was always present. If that doesn't come up, the group should ask them how they perceive the Father in Heaven and how knowing the truth about him sending the Son to save us shapes how they see this part of their story.

What are some other key areas to be listening for when hearing each other's stories?

3. Go Through the Story-Formed Way

The Story-formed Way was designed to both lead people through the basics of the Gospel and provide a foundational structure for the key doctrines of Christianity. If you are taking a mixed group of believers and unbelievers through it you will better establish the believers in the foundations and show them how to have Gospel conversations with Unbelievers. At the same time, the unbelievers are exposed to the Gospel and will learn how to share it themselves once they come to faith.

The other bonus of this activity is that it provides a variety of stories through which to see the Redemptive work of God thus giving the believer many different forms to engage in Gospel Conversation. For example, when dealing with someone struggling with financial provision, one could share the story of God feeding the Israelites in the wilderness and ultimately pointing to how Jesus is the bread of life that most deeply satisfies. Then go on to show that if God would give us his very best to meet our deep spiritual hunger, why wouldn't he also give us everything else that we need. The more Biblical Stories we know, the more versatile we become in engaging in Gospel conversations.

Name some other key Biblical Stories that relate well to your community and missional context and state how they point to Jesus?

4. Express Gospel Need and Fulfillment with Communion

Have the communion elements ready to celebrate our Lord's Death. Then ask each person to particularly identify with one of the elements (the bread or the wine) and share how they are aware of their need for the gospel in light of how the bread or wine speaks to them. This gives each person the opportunity to express the Gospel in light of their need and how the Gospel satisfies their need.

For example, someone might say: I particularly identify with the bread this week because I am realizing that I have been trusting in my own works to make me righteous before God instead of trusting in the righteous life of Jesus lived on my behalf in human flesh. Or, someone might say, I am so grateful for the cup this week because I have been overcome with the reality of my sin this week and I need to be reminded that Christ blood was poured out for me for the forgiveness of my sins.

Before you begin this process, encourage each person to listen closely to the person on their right because they will be serving them the elements in light of the gospel need they expressed after everyone has shared. This gives each person the opportunity to listen for the Gospel need in others and then “preach” the gospel into their situation.

It might sound like, This bread is to remind you that Jesus' righteous life lived in his body that was given for you on the cross is the righteousness of God exchanged for your sin and His blood was poured out for you to forgive you of your sin, including trusting in your own righteousness.

Throughout the experience the group gets to hear the Gospel need proclaim several times and then observes several different Gospel proclamations specifically applied to a unique person and situation. At the end of the night, the group will have grown in their ability to express their Gospel need, listen for the Gospel need in another's life, proclaim the Gospel contextually into that person's life and situation AND listen to other people proclaim it as well.

5. Regularly ask, "How does the Gospel address this?" and, "What about the Gospel are you not believing?"

Whenever life challenges or difficulties come up in the group's conversation, instead of giving quick advice, ask, "How does the Gospel address this?" Train your group to regularly ask how Who Jesus Is and What He Has Done shapes how we handle the stuff of life. A couple of things will happen if you do this regularly: 1) You will teach the group that the Gospel really can and does address everything in life; 2) The group will become much more fluent in Gospel conversations the more they have them; and 3) You will learn over time if they are coming to know and believe the Gospel fully.

What are some of the key issues that immediately come to your mind that seem to surface regularly in your group? How would you address them with the Gospel?

6. Slow Down to Identify Idols and Compare to Jesus

As the group gathers, listen closely to the conversations and the stories. Listen for what they are ultimately putting their trust in – ask, "What idol/god are they putting their trust in?" Sometimes the best way to identify the idols of the heart is by calling people to ministry and mission. Idols become easiest to see when we are calling people to be faithful to Jesus' mission. Listen for the excuses or reasons for not being willing or able to obey – fear, insecurities, selfishness, pride, approval of man issues, worship of children, family or work, etc...

Then, as you or the group becomes aware of the people or things that have become idols or "little gods" take the time to compare them to Jesus, showing Jesus to be the "better"; the resolution to what they are seeking elsewhere; the opposite of what they are experiencing; or the deeper reality of what they are searching for.

What are some of the obvious "idols" in your group? How would you show that Jesus is the "better"?

7. Identify Key Descriptions of Jesus' Work and Display them on Mission

Take some time to talk through what is true of Jesus in the Gospel (i.e. Advocate, Mediator, Sacrificial Offering, etc...) and then discuss how the group might display this truth about Jesus in the midst of the missionary context, being prepared to share how this work is really a result and picture of what Jesus has done and is doing.

In light of the missional context you have been sent to, what key descriptors of Jesus' identity and work if displayed would be Good News? How would you share the Gospel through that?