



A Biblical Vision For A Healthy Local Church

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By: Pastor Danny Ovalle

Genuine Christian Community and Relational Vitality (Part 4)

1 Thessalonians 2

1. The 1st part of this miniseries was: The Trinity, Because God has fellowship with God, so in Christ, we have fellowship with one another.
2. Part 2 was titled: How Grace Creates "**Genuine Love**". Romans 12 "Let Love be genuine"(Horse & Buggy picture)
3. Part 3 was titled: Jesus calls us "**Dear Friends**"
4. Last week (part 4) was about **Jesus creating, cleansing** (washing the disciples feet and driving out Judas) **and commanding a NEW Messianic community**...love one another as I have loved you...
- 5.

This morning we shall look at:

Deeply Sharing Not Only The Gospel of God...But Also Our own Lives!

In other words: deeply sharing God's story...and your story, your life!

Which is just another way of saying: A Genuine Christian Community...& Relational Vitality!

1 Thessalonians 2:8 NIV (8) We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

The Bible is made up of 3 primary characters:

God

Mankind

Devil (sub characters: Good angels, Bad Angels, animals, birds, fish...creation...)

Human history pretty much leaves man alone for consideration...God & the Devil are out.

While Biblical history is the intertwining of these 3 characters.

History is really His Story!

Whose story?

Who is the "His"?



The Bible is a grand story...a meta-narrative...the big picture...

"...the Bible provides us with an overarching narrative in which all the other narratives of the world are nested. The Bible is the story of God. The story of the world is first and foremost the story of God's activity in creating, sustaining and redeeming the world to fulfill God's purposes for it." -C. Gerkin

Scripture is an "immense, sprawling, roomy, large, voluminous narrative" - Eugene Peterson

READING THE BIBLE AS ONE STORY

Human Life Is Shaped by Some Story

All of human life is shaped by some story. Alasdair MacIntyre offers an amusing story to show how particular events receive their meaning in the context of a story. He imagines himself at a bus stop when a young man standing next to him says, "**The name of the common wild duck is *histrionicus, histrionicus, histrionicus.***"

One understands the meaning of the sentence. But why on earth is he saying it in the first place? This particular action can only be understood if it is placed in a broader framework of meaning, a story that renders the saying comprehensible. Three stories could make this particular incident meaningful.

1. The young man has mistaken the man standing next to him for another person he saw yesterday in the library who asked, "Do you by any chance know the Latin name of the common duck?"
2. Or he has just come from a session with his psychotherapist who is helping him deal with his painful shyness. The psychotherapist urges him to talk to strangers. The young man asks, "What shall I say?" The psychotherapist says, "Oh, anything at all."
3. Or again he is a spy who has arranged to meet his contact at this bus stop. The code that will reveal his identity is the statement about the Latin name of the duck.

The meaning of the encounter at the bus stop *depends on which story shapes it*; in fact, each story will give the event a different meaning.

Likewise with our lives, "The way we understand human life depends on what conception we have of the human story. What is the real story of which my life story is a part" (*The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* [Eerdmans, 1989] 15).

N. T. Wright says that a story is "the best way of talking about *the way the world actually is*" (*The New Testament and the People of God* [SPCK, 1992] 40).

For those of us living in the West, basically two stories are on offer: the biblical and the humanist. As Newbigin points out: "In our contemporary culture . . . two quite different stories are told. One is the story of evolution, of the development of species through the survival of the strong, and the story of the rise of civilization, our type of civilization, and its success in giving humankind mastery of nature. The other story is the one embodied in the Bible, the story of



creation and fall, of God's election of a people to be the bearers of his purpose for humankind, and of the coming of the one in whom that purpose is to be fulfilled. These are two different and incompatible stories" (15-16).

The Bible Tells One Story

The Bible tells one unfolding story of redemption against the backdrop of creation and humanity's fall into sin. As Wright has put it, the divine drama told in Scripture "offers a story which is the story of the whole world. It is public truth" (41-42).

BACK TO OUR MAIN POINT:

Deeply Sharing Not Only The Gospel of God...But Also Our own Lives!

1 Thessalonians 2:8 NIV (8) We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

It occurred to me just recently that since I have been called to HCC last October, I have not had the occasion to tell you my story in detail. Well, since, just yesterday, I celebrated the 27th anniversary of my conversion, I thought this would be a good way to lead us in sharing not only the Gospel of God...but also my own life story with you...and encourage you to do likewise, as we are growing in our friendships together.

The Gospel of God intertwined with my life!

[NOTE: when you tell His story in the telling of your life story, remember God is the main character, not you...]

see: Acts 3.11ff and 14.8-18



This morning, in the telling of my story, a brief 27 years ago yesterday, I shall seek to tell the Gospel of God in the testimony of grace that has come to me:

1. Birth to New Birth (20 years)

(did you know a person needs 2 birthdays to get to God in heaven? See John 3)

- A. Raise in the Projects of Chelsea
- B. Nominal Catholic (baptized, 1st communion, confirmation, Pope Pius XII)
- C. Childhood, teens, to June 6, 1982

2. New Birth to Ministry Opportunities (27 years)

- A. Catholic – Catholic Charismatic – A/G – WEZE teachers – Calvary Chapel – CCBC – Mexico – Calvary Chapel Boston – Coram Deo – Andover Baptist – NEBC – King of Grace – HCC!
- B. I was not looking for God...He was looking for me!
- C. The Christian life is all of grace! Beginning to end!
- D. Soon you & I will die!

HCC Family: Let's grow in:

1. Telling one another our story

2. Telling one another our story in relation to the big picture...God's story in the Gospel of Jesus.

God created us for His own glory & purposes. You are not your own by creation...and redemption.

Have you been redeemed by the death & resurrection of Jesus?

If not, here is truth hitting you right between the eyes...and ears!

1 Timothy 1:12-17 NIV I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. (13) Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. (14) The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (15) Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. (16) But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. (17) Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Let's celebrate the broken body & shed blood of Jesus for such a one as us!

Amen!