

CMC Follow-Up Reading #3

Affirmation 3. The Power of the Gospel and Urgency of Evangelization.

We believe that the God Incarnate, Jesus Christ, is the only way to receive salvation and to be reconciled with God. We need the transforming power of the Gospel more desperately now than ever. We acknowledge that my life, family, career and church should all reflect the saving grace of God and each should be a vehicle to share the good news to everyone else.

The Apostle Paul said "I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Ro. 1:16)." He had experienced the gospel's life-changing power first-hand, and he had seen others experience it, too. Paul proclaimed this gospel message to a hostile, pagan culture with great conviction of its truth and full confidence in its ability to penetrate the minds and hearts of lost people. And people responded.

The post-Christian culture of America needs to hear this life-changing message every bit as much as the Greco-Roman culture of Paul's day. We are immersed in a postmodern mentality, which rejects moral absolutes and embraces *relativism* at every level. The Barna Research Group found that "By a 3-to-1 margin (64% vs. 22%) adults said truth is always relative to the person and their situation. The perspective was even more lopsided among teenagers, 83% of whom said moral truth depends on the circumstances, and only 6% of whom said moral truth is absolute."¹ *Religious pluralism* is also widespread, with 43% of Americans believing that "it does not matter what religious faith you follow because they all teach the same lessons." *Universalism*, the idea that ultimately all people will be saved, is quite popular as well. When asked to respond to the following statement: "All people are eventually saved or accepted by God, no matter what they do, because he loves all people he has created," 40% agreed. These are the views of the general public.²

What do people in the church think about these issues? Concerning relativism, Barna reports that "Among adults, 32% of those who were born again said they believe in moral absolutes."³ Imagine that: only 1/3 of born again people believe in absolute moral values! The case with Universalism and pluralism is also troubling: "One-quarter of born again Christians said that all people are eventually saved or accepted by God (25%) and that it doesn't matter what religious faith you follow because they all teach the same lessons (26%)."⁴

In light of this research, it would be easy to become discouraged about the state of American culture and the Church. But that is not the path God calls us to walk. While we must be realists in assessing where we are at this time, we must not stop there. Instead, we must

¹ <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/67-americans-are-most-likely-to-base-truth-on-feelings#.UyxDsNxRr8s>

² <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality/484-what-americans-believe-about-universalism-and-pluralism#.Uyw-F9xRr8s>

³ <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/67-americans-are-most-likely-to-base-truth-on-feelings#.UyxDsNxRr8s>

⁴ <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality/484-what-americans-believe-about-universalism-and-pluralism#.UyxHW9xRr8s>

take the further step of putting these things into biblical perspective: our Father in heaven is Creator of the heavens and the earth and rules over them as King. Nothing is too difficult for him. He has given all authority to his Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. And Jesus has in turn given us a mission to pursue in his service that will help rescue many who walk in darkness and confusion. We are to take the good news of the gospel to men and women everywhere urging them to repent of their sins, trust in Jesus and enter God's kingdom (Mt. 28:18-20). As we do so, God's kingdom expands and displaces the darkness of this present world.

At the heart of our message is the fact that the Risen Christ is Lord of all and that there is salvation in him alone. Jesus says "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Peter echoed this when he said, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). This message will be gladly received by some. But others will find it hard, because it insists on the uniqueness of Christ and does not compromise. Postmodern people want options, many options; they also want relativistic religion and morality. They may be prepared to say that Jesus is *a* way to God but not *the* way. They may also say that Christ is fine for you but is not for them. The truth remains, however, that there is no salvation outside of Christ. Not in Buddha, not in Confucius, not in Mohammed, not in Shiva, not in anyone or anything else.

How do we engage people with the good news of Jesus? Certainly, there are helpful books that can guide us in how to communicate the message of Christ in a wise, winsome and persuasive way. It is important to read such books to gain insight and proficiency. But knowledge and skill alone will not win people to Christ. They are good and we need them, but they are not good enough. People must also see something of Christ in our lives - something of his love, compassion, gentleness and humility. Jesus said we are to be salt of the earth and light of the world. Through such a life we help people see and thirst for the Christ whose life we reflect (Mt. 5:14-16). Paul says the same thing: we are to be an aroma of Christ, spreading the fragrance of Christ everywhere we go (2 Cor. 2: 14-16). Living this way gets the attention of non-believers and gives us credibility in their eyes. This doesn't require us to be perfect or highly advanced in our Christian life. It does require that we be honest and real, acknowledging that we are seeking to follow Jesus but are still a work in progress.

As we demonstrate Christlikeness in the way we pursue our career, do our work and treat our coworkers, and as our family and community life also bear witness of Christ, those who know us will see something different about us. This difference will establish our authenticity and open doors to share the gospel in a compelling way, for we are a living epistle of the message we proclaim.

Personal Reflections:

1. In contrast with the Gospel, what secular "counterfeit gospels" the world is trying to impose on us? How do you normally respond to them?
2. Pay extra attention to your heart dynamics when you fall in frustration or temptations. What are you most feared of? Anxious about? (Loosing which) will cause you to loose the hope of life? What is your daily motivation of living? When circumstances go wrong, what do you reply on for comfort? How does Christ's crucifixion and resurrection enable me to face setbacks and temptations ... Pray in the Spirit that God may apply the essence of the

Gospel (*our previous status, current status, Christ's Atonement and Lordship, Eternal Hope*) to you heart.

3. Meditate on the differences of a life that is continually being empowered by the Gospel with that of someone who only views the gospel as a ticket to salvation. What life differences will they make? "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age." (Titus 2:11-12)

Recommended Reading:

Article: *Gospel Renewal: Center Church Part 2*. Timothy Keller, Pastor and Church Planter, Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.

Is Jesus Really the Only Way to God? Dennis Hollinger, President, Gordon-Conwell Seminary; [http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/Is Jesus Really the Only Way to God page1](http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/Is_Jesus_Really_the_Only_Way_to_God_page1)

Book: *Jesus Among Other Gods*, Ravi Zacharias; *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air*, Francis Beckwith and Greg Koukl