

A Gospel Culture Isn't Easy, But It Is Possible

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[0 : 00] I'm going to go ahead and read Galatians 2 verse 14.

! And there it says, But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, if you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like the Jews?

And so we're going to get more deeper into this passage, but just to begin, thank you. As I was saying, I think we could all retell stories, especially those of us who have grown up in the church. We could all retell stories or experiences that we had in the church where the church acted less like a city on a hill and more like a war zone.

Where, you know, each time the church gathered, whether it was in the morning or the evening, it just felt very tense because of different things that were going on. And so sometimes, unfortunately, the church feels that way.

[1 : 12] We don't act like Christ. We act more like the world. That creates problems. And so still to me, the one story that trumps them all, and I know that I've already shared this before, and I'll probably share it again because I just, it's still, I just can't imagine, have been there when this happened is back in Leavenworth, I had a pastor who had been at his church for like 40-something years.

It was over 40 years. It was amazing. And so I would talk to him from time to time, and I can't even remember what brought up the conversation, but there was something going on, and so I was asking him about it.

And this thing that I thought was really important in our church, something that was, you know, causing a little bit of conflict, but not a whole lot. And then he proceeded to tell me the story about this business meeting that they had in their church, and there was two little old ladies, and one was sitting in front of the other, and they were fighting, and they were arguing.

And it got to the point where it ended with one lady who was sitting behind the other lady spitting in her hair, spitting in her hair. And so I told him, I said, oh my goodness, what was that argument about?

And he thought for a moment, and he said, you know what, I don't even remember. But I think, you know, that's interesting, isn't it? We often don't even know what these disputes are about, but we remember more how people interacted with each other through them, and just how nasty things can get in the body of Christ.

[2 : 52] So let's not pretend as if experiencing this kind of gospel community that we've been talking about is going to come easily, because sin affects us all. And so we need to be reminded of the gospel continually, day by day, in order to experience this kind of community.

And so your first fill-in there is this. We either proudly believe that we are too good to be judged. This is what causes conflict a lot of times. We are either too proudly, we either proudly believe that we are too good to be judged, or we proudly believe we are too bad to be saved.

So the gospel is a continual surprise, and we need to hear it again and again, because we usually tend to drift towards one of these two camps. It's where we start to feel like we're too good to be judged, or we feel like we're too bad to be saved.

And so either one of those things we can tend to drift into. So we must be reminded of the gospel continually to keep us from either of those two things.

Martin Luther said that the gospel cannot be beaten into our ears enough or too much. Yes, though we learn it and understand it well, there is no one who takes hold of it perfectly or believes it with all of his heart.

[4 : 01] So frail a thing is our flesh and disobedient to the spirit. So it requires a new way of thinking to believe that God is for us only because of what Jesus earned, not what we've earned.

It means readjusting our perspective continually every day to embrace the fact that our lives depend upon something from outside of ourselves, not from within.

If you remember from the very beginning, God, it was God who breathed life into the very first man, Adam. And he gave he and his wife the tree of life to constantly refresh and to sustain them.

Adam had to accept God's word and reach out toward God for life moment by moment. God breathed life into him and he sustained his life continually.

The temptation of the devil was and is this. Don't risk yourself on God. Trust your own instincts. Live from within yourself. You take control because God cannot be trusted.

[5 : 03] And that goes back to what this morning sermon had to deal with. It's how often we like to go our own way. We like to go our own path thinking that we know better than God. And that's obviously that's the devil's strategy.

That's what he wants us to do is to take us from being obedient and growing like Christ to going our own way and doing our own thing. Because obviously he wants what's worst for us.

Ray Ortlund says the gospel changes us down deep at this intuitive level. When God justifies us in Christ, he directly counteracts our whole self-involved strategy for living.

He credits a righteousness to us that depends on someone else. Recreating the Edenic relationship and drawing us out of ourselves into his fullness. We now follow Christ, the new and better Adam.

So a gospel culture, as we've been discussing, is harder to lay hold of than gospel doctrine is. A gospel culture requires us to put others ahead of ourselves.

[6 : 01] This is not an easy adjustment for us to make. But living in this kind of community is a wonderful thing. We find ourselves saying when we live in this kind of community, like the Apostle Paul did in Philippians 3, 8-10.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.

And be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ. The righteousness from God that depends on faith. So, Paul did not regard the loss of his inflated self as sacrificial.

No one admires dung. That's what he's saying. I counted them as rubbish. That's a Greek word for dung. Nobody admires those kinds of things. It's a relief to be rid of those things.

It's a relief, Paul says, to be rid of our egotism. And when a whole church exhibits this kind of attitude, the gospel culture is then embodied. The gospel community then is a place where sinners and sufferers come alive because the Lord is there, giving himself freely to the desperate and the undeserving.

[7 : 14] The gospel community is a place where sinners and sufferers come alive because the Lord is there, giving himself freely to the desperate and the undeserving. The primary barrier to displaying the gospel in our community comes from our attempts to reinsert ourselves in the place where only Christ deserves to be.

Exalting ourselves always diminishes his visibility. So, we must wake up every day and we must seek to unself ourselves. Does that sound confusing?

We must wake up every day seeking to unself ourselves. Now, I don't want you to get the wrong understanding of what I'm suggesting here because I'm not suggesting that we turn into some kind of commune here where we all dress the same, we all wear our hair the same way, we all talk the same way, right?

I'm not suggesting that we develop some kind of a commune like that. We're not to lose who we are, who God made us to be. This means becoming, though, like Christ. That's what our goal is. We're trying to become not so much like one another, but we're trying to become like Jesus Christ. And so, in being like Jesus Christ, this means that like Christ, we put others before ourselves.

[8 : 32] This is what it means to unself yourself, is that you no longer are the center of your universe, but the Lord Jesus Christ is. And so, when he occupies that central location in your life, you're going to see people differently.

You're going to see people the way that Jesus Christ sees people. But too often, unfortunately, we aren't able to do that or aren't willing to do that.

And so, there will be different battles within the church. And a lot of times, those battles are a result of people not being like Christ, but being self-centered.

You know, because we're thinking about, well, my rights or what I like or what I prefer, my traditions. To share a story, we, in Leavenworth, there was a time where there was some debate over the style of worship that we had as a church.

Because we had a group of people that like more traditional worship with the organ. We had a group of people that wanted to have the drums and the electric guitar and, you know, have the praise team.

[9 : 42] And so, you know, we tried to find the best of both worlds, but I remember sitting in those meetings and they would say to me, well, just do what you want. What would you have us to do? How do you want it?

And I said, I'm not going to do that. You know, I'm not going to, I'm not going to, it's not going to be the type of church that I want it to be. Because we're trying to tell each other that it's not about that, you know. It's not about who I am or what I prefer.

Because we're a body, right? And we have different preferences. We have different things that we like over than others. And so we do what we can to try to, you know, you can't please everybody, but we don't want to alienate anybody either.

You understand what I'm saying? And so we've got to be putting the others first. So for our older generations, they think about the younger generations. And they think that, you know what? Eventually, I want them to be leaders. I want their children to be in their place. And so they look at the future of the church. And so they're willing to make some changes because they care about the younger people.

[10 : 50] And the younger people, likewise, are willing to let some things go or whatever or show respect, at the very least, to the older generations. Understanding that, you know, they came before and that they've paved the way.

And that we are to respect our elders, right? And so we value them. And so it's a given, it's a putting others before yourself. And when we do that, we're able to get over these kinds of things that we battle over, that we shouldn't battle over.

And so in order to do that, we need God's wisdom. We need God's wisdom to be able to build a gospel culture. Because there will be times when we feel as if everything is falling apart in our church.

However, such times can be a great time for a church because through those times, as difficult as they may be, God is able to open our eyes to see what we need most and who we need to depend on most, which is Him.

The best way, then, to do church is always to place our endless need before His endless supply. The best way to do church is to always put our endless need before His endless supply.

[12 : 00] I'll give you time to fill that out because there's another fill-in right away. And I love this quote by A.W. Tozer. For a while, it was on my whiteboard. And it's just a good one to be reminded of in the church.

And he said this, Pseudo-faith, so fake faith, always arranges a way out to serve in case God fails it. Real faith knows only one way and gladly allows itself to be stripped of any second way or makeshift substitutes.

For true faith, it is either God or total collapse. And get this, and not since Adam first stepped foot on the earth has God failed a single man or woman or church who trusted in Him.

So, His words of encouragement to us is to risk for the gospel.

We're not really risking because we understand that, you know, God is there. God has an endless supply. But He calls us to walk by faith, not by sight.

[13 : 09] For whatever we strike out to do in His name, we can believe that it will not fail because God will be there to see whatever it is through. But, though we know this, it is hard for us to trust the Lord in such a daring way.

The false safety of self is an enduring problem for Christians. Especially Christians in the United States of America, I would say. The desire for false safety was a problem even for the apostles. Because as Americans, we always feel like, well, we've got to have a backup plan, a plan B, a plan C, a plan D. And there's nothing wrong with doing that for some things.

You know what I'm saying? I'm not saying don't have a will or anything like that. And I'm saying it's good to have plans. But when it comes to the church, we shouldn't have, there isn't a plan B, right? It's Jesus Christ and Him alone. And that's who we serve. That's who we share with people. He is the way, the truth, and the life. And so we trust that whatever we seek to do, when we go out and do engaged types events, and we're hoping that people will turn up, or when we have fall festival, and we're hoping that people will turn up, we believe, I believe, that when we are out there, we're putting ourselves out there, and we're willing to share the gospel with people, with our words and with our lives, then God will send people our way.

[14 : 30] God will put people in our path. In order for us to do that, I believe that. But we still struggle to believe that, and we are not in a company of our own.

We are like the apostles who had the same problems. This is one of the lessons we learned from the famous confrontation between Peter and Paul that we read here about in Galatians, which Paul recounts for us in his letter.

So if you're there in Galatians chapter 2, look at verses 11 through 13. Let's back up a little bit. And then there Paul talks about when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him.

And Cephas, that's Peter. I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. John Stott calls this one of the most tense and dramatic episodes in the New Testament.

This wasn't a case of personal rivalry between Peter and Paul, but a clash between gospel and tradition. Paul could see that nothing less than the gospel was at stake here in what Peter was doing at that time.

[15 : 52] He refused then to stand by in silence while other leaders destroyed a gospel culture for the sake of their traditions. There wasn't anything intrinsically wrong with Peter's Jewish customs, but there was something very, very wrong with requiring adherence to them after Christ had fulfilled all of those things, which Peter did by distancing himself from the unkosher Gentile believers.

In effect, Peter's actions suggested that the Gentile believers had not to only believe the gospel, but also they needed to adopt to Jewish culture in order for them to be good enough for Christ and good enough for him.

He was not treating them as equals, and in doing so, he was really exalting himself and the Jews that he ate with over the rest of the church and over even Jesus Christ who saved them all.

This was a major insult then to Christ's work on the cross, and it was a major violation of justification by faith alone. The unclean, unclean, unclean, the clean, unclean laws that had long been observed by the Jews according to the Mishnah, which is the Jewish application of the Old Testament law, said this, it said this, the dwelling places of Gentiles are unclean.

So, all his life, Peter was careful to not catch the Gentile contagion like elementary school kids, you know.

[17 : 25] Boys don't want to catch cooties from girls, and cooties don't want to catch, girls don't want to catch cooties from boys. It's kind of that thing, you know. We can't be around those people because there's something icky about them, and if we're around them, then we're going to get their ickiness too.

That's the way that the Jews in more severe ways thought about the Gentiles. But Peter had seen for himself that God had fulfilled the law's demands through Jesus Christ.

Three times God told Peter, if you remember in Acts chapter 10, before these events, God told him in that vision when he's praying, what God has made clean, do not call common.

What God has made clean, do not call common. So, the point that God was making there to him could not be missed. But then again, we're talking about Peter.

And Peter had a way of putting his foot in his mouth. I love Peter because I think a lot of people can identify with him. He often had really good intentions, but he didn't always go about doing what he wanted to in the right way.

[18 : 33] He would often say things, and he meant well, but man, he couldn't be more wrong. Some of us are very much like Peter, and like Peter, we need to learn our lessons the hard way.

And Peter was that kind of a learner. He learned his lessons the hard way. What caused Peter here, though, to be in such grave violation of the gospel? Why do you think? That Peter knew all these things, God had told him these things, and yet he still here in this moment is in violation of the gospel.

What did it? What was the motivation behind it? Go ahead, Wes, take a stab. Yes! Fear, peer pressure in the form of fear of human disapproval.

He was afraid of being disapproved by his peers. Yeah, and so he got in that holy huddle. What is the other one? Collect, cautious click.

So fear of human disapproval caused Peter to draw back. And there it says he drew back and separated himself because he feared the circumcision party.

[19 : 40] Like all of us, Peter had a history of fear. When he denied Jesus on the night of Jesus' arrest, remember? He feared physical harm.

In Antioch, he effectively denied Jesus because he feared social harm. Driven by that fear, then he falsified the gospel. So fear of human disapproval destroys honesty.

It builds walls that Jesus died to tear down. It corrupts good doctrine. So in other words, the problem entered in not at the level of doctrine, this problem here between Paul and Peter.

It didn't enter in at the level of doctrine, but at the level of culture. It started with personal fear, not with reading a theology book. So Paul twice called it hypocrisy.

He says, and the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. Peter's example pressured Gentile believers to conform outwardly to Jewish customs in order to be fully accepted members of the church.

[20 : 44] His actions were causing them to feel that way. It's not just enough to be justified by faith. I've got to do all these other works as well. Fear of human disapproval is a powerful thing.

We like to be perceived by others in a way where we feel like we're desired. We like to feel like we're respected. We like to feel like we're admired by other people.

And so because of that, we have a fear of human disapproval. Fear can be a powerful force among Christians. Peter's fear was so influential in this moment that even Barnabas, and I like the way that Paul puts it, even Barnabas, the son of encouragement, even that happy-go-lucky guy, even he was drawn into all of this.

Even he was swept away by this behavior. Paul alone here had the clarity and courage to demand that the apostles reapply the original doctrine of their culture so that the gospel message would go forward unhindered.

And so here we see a little equation that right doctrine plus wrong culture equals doctrinal denial.

So we've got it on paper, the right doctrine, but if we're not putting it into practice, what we're really doing is denying the doctrine that we have on paper.

[22 : 09] So in response to Peter's hypocrisy, Paul took a bold stand. In Galatians 2.5 it says, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

So Paul was not interested here in mere recitation of the gospel, but in a clear understanding of what the gospel was. Why? Well, Paul knew that it was possible for us to unsay by our practical church culture what we say in our official church doctrine.

It is possible to hold to the gospel as a theory even as we lose it in reality. So all this to say in a very simple way, it's not practicing what you preach.

And that's a big problem for the church. We can be deceived into thinking that just because our statement of faith is right, that we must be exhibiting that in our worship services, meetings, and times of fellowship.

Just because we think, hey, the statement of faith is right. We can even apply that to the vision. The vision sounds good, but if we're not following through with those things, then what good are they?

[23 : 15] Peter believed the right things. Peter never denied the true gospel, but he contradicted the truth of the gospel by his behavior there in that church setting.

Peter was effectively rebuilding in the church a culture of self-salvation, though he wasn't fully aware that this was precisely what his actions were saying.

So like Peter, we can sincerely love the grace of God and at the same time, unwittingly nullify that grace by our actions.

Galatians 2, 11 through 14 is clear that all who trust Jesus for their justification are clean before God, whatever their background was prior to their salvation.

If God declares us kosher through Christ alone, then no one can rightly demand more of us. That is gospel doctrine, I should say.

[24 : 20] That doctrine then creates a culture of gracious acceptance for all kinds of believers. Gospel culture must be as carefully protected as our doctrine.

So Paul fought for it because the doctrine of salvation by grace cannot be preserved with integrity if it is surrounded by a culture of salvation by self. Jesus Christ is all the Savior that we'll ever need. We don't need to pile on good works on top of the work that he's done on the cross for us. And all week long, as we live our lives, we swim in an ocean of judgment and negative scrutiny.

It can be at home, it can be at work, it can be in many different places where we constantly feel like we're being judged, we constantly feel like we're being scrutinized, we constantly then feel like we need to comply with the demands of a touchy world, and we feel like we never seem to measure up. Then on Sunday, what's supposed to happen, because all of us go through this throughout the week, right? Then on Sunday, what's supposed to happen is we walk into a different kind of community than we've been going through the rest of the week.

[25 : 47] We walk into a different kind of community where we discover an environment that has been cultivated by grace alone. It's a place where the topic is changed from what's wrong with us, what's wrong with you, to what's right with Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther, I want to close with this quote from him, says this, think carefully who this Son of God is, how glorious He is, how mighty He is, what is heaven and earth in comparison with Him.

The law did not love me or give itself for me. Indeed, it accuses me, terrifies me, and drives me to despair. But now I have someone who has set me free from the terrors of the law, sin and death, and has brought me to freedom, the righteousness of God and eternal life.

He is the Son of God, to whom He prays in glory forever. Read these words, He loved me and gave Himself for me with great emphasis. With a firm faith, you may engrave this me on your heart and apply it to yourself, not doubting that you are among those whom this me belongs.

Amen. Alright. So, some reflective questions over this message. And I've enjoyed these, these dialogues have been good.

[27 : 11] I have the microphone up here. And Cameron is so great at running around the sanctuary and getting you the microphone.

But again, we want to hear what you have to say, so make sure you wait to share it until you get the microphone. First question. Why do you think that it is harder to lay hold of a gospel culture than gospel doctrine?

Why is it harder to lay hold of a gospel culture than a gospel doctrine? Alright, Cam. Well, I'll just go first since I've already got it. I think, you know, even in culture, we have the saying, do as I say, not as I do.

Yeah. It's so much easier to say something than it is to actually live it. Absolutely. We're really good at finding faults within others, but not so good at looking at our own faults.

Right? Okay. Casey has the microphone, or she has a comment. Also, because the worldly culture is so overwhelming in everything, entertainment, you know, music, TV, so we kind of have to eliminate a lot of things that we used to enjoy.

[28 : 32] Yeah. To replace them with godly things, things that point us to Jesus. Sure. So there's a conflict that we're in between worldliness and godliness, and kind of like we talked about in this morning's sermon as well, is that we are to look strange to the rest of the world, and there's a problem if we don't, if godliness looks stranger to us than worldliness does.

So that can be a problem. That can be why it's hard. We can get the right thing down on paper, but then in practice, we fall apart because the world has too powerful of an influence on us. What other comments do you have?

Why do you think that it's harder to lay hold of a gospel culture than gospel doctrine? I'd say it's easy to put something on paper. You know?

Especially when we're talking about gospel doctrine. We can go to a lot of other churches, and we can look at their statement of faith, and we can, hey, that looks really good. We can adapt that here. And so we can put anything on paper.

I mean, that's easy to do. But when it's actually putting it into practice, that's where it gets a lot harder. And so, yeah, it's easy to write something on paper, but then to actually do it, that's where it gets difficult, where the rubber meets the road, and we're just not as able to do it as we thought.

[29 : 55] Okay, Wes, Cam, did you have your hand up too? I did. I'll let Wes go first. Okay. I think it's kind of back to the peer pressure thing, where here in church, it's really good to be all churchy and bless you, brother, and all that kind of stuff.

But then when you go to work and you're on the outside world, it's a totally different thing, where you've got to behave differently or should be behaving differently, but you've got all these outside pressures that make you want to, you know, accept things that you shouldn't, probably, just because you want to blend in and all that kind of stuff, to not be a camouflaged Christian. Yeah. It's difficult to be strange, you know, because we do have that desire to assimilate with wherever we're at, whatever, you know, wherever in workplace, we don't want to feel like we're left out or whatever the conversations are.

It's difficult. Okay, Cam. And Wes and Shirley can attest to this. At the VOM conference yesterday, we listened to a guy from Iran, Iraq, Iran, Iran, and he, you know, grew up in persecution. His father was a Christian pastor in Iran, went missing for 12 days. They found him stabbed 26 times, you know, had to go into the military at 18 by Iran law, was persecuted, beaten.

[31 : 16] And so when he knew he was getting the chance to leave Iran and come to the U.S., he goes, oh man, I can't wait. You know, they've got to be so on fire for Christ.

They've got to be, they've got commentaries and they've got so many people they can lean on and it's just got to be awesome to be there. And he goes, I got to the U.S.

and I was so disappointed. And so it really hit me hard that, you know, in the U.S., our lives are so comfortable, I think we get comfortable as Christians that we just kind of are able to just kind of float through life not, you know, making ourselves uncomfortable, not, you know, pushing the envelope any that, and that really hit me hard from the conference yesterday of him saying, I was so disappointed when I got to the U.S.

to see churches just kind of, and he used the term asleep, that he actually sung a song and wrote a song about it, about wake up. Yeah, that's convicting.

I think it's an accurate portrayal, unfortunately, though. Yeah, a lot of times we just get lazy in the church. We can have it on paper, but again, if we're not actually doing it, that's bad on our part.

[32 : 37] Let's move on to the next question. How can we better put others before ourselves? Now, I know everybody has the typical Sunday school answers for this question, right?

And I'm thinking more, like, practically. What are some ways that we can put others ahead of ourselves? What are some things that have helped you?

What are some things that you have heard that you think would be helpful for others? Wes? Again, from the conference yesterday, thinking this guy was being beaten, you know, by his captors and stuff.

It's like, I'm supposed to love my enemy. It's like, I can't just do that. He can't do it. And he said he had, at one moment, he had this little flash in his mind of God asking him, you think about how I look at him, how God looks at this guy that's beating him.

It's like, well, he loves him. And so that helped him kind of make that change. So I think, on our part, we look at different people and not necessarily want to help out or put them before you, but if you were to put them, think of them the way God or Jesus would look at that person, it might make it easier to be more, what's the word, waiting for, I can't think of the word.

[33 : 52] When you're just kind of waiting on someone, it's like, okay, I'll tolerate what you're doing and things like that. It might make it easier if you're thinking the way God looks at them instead of just the way you're looking at them. This guy's a, you know, a kook or something.

It's like, well, I'll be more patient. That's the word I'm looking for. Okay. Good. Other comments? Okay. Paula? Well, what comes to mind for me is the stuff we were talking about this morning, thinking about when you were the first, we think about, of course, the first time we came to this church, we didn't know anybody.

We were, hadn't been in town a long time and all that. Or the first time anywhere. I know Dave's come back to a lot of people when they, somebody's new on a job and they say, oh, it's my first day, you know, kind of thing.

And he'll always say, well, everybody's new once. And so you are, and you just get through that first day. If you can just help them get through that first high on Paula, you know, just anything to help, help them feel more comfortable.

Good. Yeah. Going out of your way, making sure you help people feel comfortable especially when they're new. Kayla? For the people that are around us in church, just because they're in church and they're here where they quote unquote should be, doesn't mean that they still need help.

[35 : 12] So I think a lot of times we get caught up in helping outside of church, which is good. We should be out there and involved, but I think we tend to neglect some of the people in the church

that are asking for help.

And so one thing that hit me is on Monday night during book club is really listening to the prayer requests that get mentioned and to try to think like if I were in that position, you know, what would I expect from my brothers and sisters that are sitting here around me?

So I think a lot of times if we just stop and listen to people, they're crying out and telling us how they need help. And I think it's laid out there for you of how to put others first is by taking that step to listen to see how you can help them.

Good. And a common thread between all the comments made is kind of like Kayla said is ability and willingness to put yourself in somebody else's shoes. I know we've heard that, you know, growing up as kids but it's true, isn't it?

Willing to stop and actually put yourself in that person's position. What if it was me going through that? You know, how would I feel? What would my needs be? And then seeking to try to be a help to that person.

[36 : 28] Very good. What about when it comes to conflict? When we, there will be conflict in the church. It's just for sinful people. No church is perfect and as they always say if you find it don't go because it won't be perfect anymore.

But we have conflict in the church. So what if something happens to you at church that offends you? You know? How do we handle it best going through this putting others before ourselves? I think we go to Matthew 18, right? Jesus told us how to handle conflict with one another. So, when you feel like you've been wronged in the church by somebody else, whatever the case may be, something was said to you that hurt your feelings, something wasn't said to you that hurt your feelings, there's a number of different things.

This was interesting about being with the pastors in Latvia because you hear all these stories and I point at Willard because I know, you know, when pastors get together these stories tend to come out and it's just kind of like, well, you think that's bad?

I got one that can top that. And so, it's inevitable that there will be conflict. And so, one thing that has helped me obviously is going back to scripture and how you are to handle these conflicts.

[37 : 52] But the first thing is to think about the person who you feel wounded by and was it intentional or not? That's one thing to think about too because a lot of times if you'll actually sit down instead of just reacting and think about it, you know, hey, did they really mean that that way or maybe I heard it wrong or maybe they were having a bad day, whatever the case may be.

You know, was it really as malicious as I thought it was in the time? And so, take time to reflect upon that and you feel like, you know what, it wasn't really that malicious or that group is doing something that I don't like, whatever the case may be, but you feel like, you know what, at this point I don't feel like the gospel is under any kind of threat by that.

Is it better for me just to forgive that person and let it go? But, agape love? Give the microphone to Willard, would you?

Okay. Well, just in case, you want to maybe be over on that side. But yeah, so, and then the next step would be, if it was malicious, if it is something that threatens the gospel, then what are you to do?

You take it to that person directly and you talk to them directly with the point that you're not trying to take out God's vengeance on that person for whatever has happened, right?

[39 : 18] But you talk to that person with the hope that whatever threatens the relationship or the harmony in the church will be resolved. So, we have these conversations with the intention of resolution.

But if still that continues to be a problem that doesn't get better, then we take it to, we bring a witness with us, take it to the leaders of the church, we take it to the church collectively.

These are the ways that we're to handle conflict in our church. Unfortunately, we don't tend to do those things. We don't tend to follow that process.

Instead, we, you know, I think in a way we elevate ourselves over others and we either feel like, you know what, I've been hurt and I'm going to make a big deal out of this.

I don't care what kind of pain this causes other people in the church or how uncomfortable it gets because I'm hurt and I'm going to take it out on somebody, kind of like a wounded animal, you know? I'm going to bite the first thing that I see.

[40 : 19] Or, we say, you know what, forget it, I'm just not even going to do with it at all and I'm going to pack up and I'm getting out of this place and unfortunately, you know, you see that happen with a lot of people who do go to church is they'll go to a church, they like the feeling of being new and then something happens that they are disagreement about and instead of handling it the way scripture says, they take matters into their own hands and they end up leaving and going and doing the same thing at the next place that they're at.

So, you know, we're to be dying to ourselves every day and I know that conflict is an uncomfortable thing and I think if you like conflict then there's something wrong with you. You should probably be like a cage fighter or something like that, you know?

But it's something that unfortunately we're going to have to deal with in the church from time to time and in that dying to yourself, if it's something that you feel like really jeopardizes the church and the health of it, then you must say something, you must go to that person, you must share it with them again with the hope of resolution.

We ought to be able to talk to each other in such a way because we also live in a culture right now where people are very thin-skinned, you know what I'm saying? And they're just going to get even more thin-skinned as this next generation grows up because, you know, I go to, now I'm going to get off on a little bit of a tangent and a rabbit trail but I don't care because this is bothering me when I go to Jack's soccer games and it's just like, you know, they don't keep score.

You know, everything is all about not saying that fairness is a bad thing but like everything is about fairness to a point where it's not fair anymore.

[42 : 03] You know what I'm saying? Where it's not fair anymore. It's not, it's unfair to try to be so fair. And so it's just like, what are we teaching our kids, you know, that they're going to grow up thinking that, yeah, we, you know, we get a trophy no matter what.

Everybody wins. man, I've learned a lot of important and valuable lessons in sports and the most important and valuable lessons I think that I've learned have been getting beat badly and having to deal with it.

Get out of here. Get out of here. I won't share the story about you this afternoon, buddy. But I've learned a lot of valuable lessons from that and I think it's usually when we've messed up, when we've made mistakes, when we've failed, that's where we really learn a lot about who we are and then we are reminded not just about sports but about our dependence and our need for God.

And so, when it comes to church, like my, so again, using another sports illustration, my coach in college, I can't even remember what he said to me but there was one practice he said something to me and man, it really bothered me.

I mean, it made me really mad. I can't even remember what it was but he got mad at me that I got so mad at him for whatever he had to say and he just kind of stopped and looked at me and he said, you know what, Scrivani?

[43 : 22] He's like, you know what you need? You need greasy shoulders and I was like, what? And he's like, you don't, he's like, I'll tell you, you got to have greasy shoulders so whatever people say, it just rolls off your back. Just let it roll off your back and so that was good advice and I, you know, don't actually put grease on your shoulders but you know, you think, yeah, there are some things that hurt and so again, that's why you got to stop and think, is this really malicious and you do need to say something but if not, you just say, you know what, I care more about the glory of Jesus Christ than my own glory and getting back at whoever has offended me but if it threatens the gospel, then something must be done, something must be done, must be said.

Alright, we've hit that question pretty good. Let's move on to the next one. What's the difference between pseudo-faith and true faith? From that quote from A.W. Tozer, pseudo-faith, like a pretend faith, it's like a facade of faith that looks like it's faith but in reality, it's not truly faith.

What's the difference between pseudo-faith and genuine faith? Doylene. I have to have faith and trust God no matter if it's my way or His way, hopefully I'm willing to go His way but pseudo-faith to me means as long, it's good faith as long as it goes the way I want it to go.

Yeah. But when the going gets tough, where is my faith? Is it still in God or self? And hopefully it's in God. Okay, good point because sometimes when we feel like we're on the mountaintop, we're like, oh, faith is an easy thing.

You know, of course because things are always going our way. But when things aren't going the way that we think that they should go, it's harder to have that true faith. Wes in the back, what's the difference between pseudo-faith and true faith?

[45 : 18] We should just leave a microphone back there for you. I was going to say, I don't know to say what's the difference but it's going to show in your actions. Okay, how so? If you really are have true faith then you're going to take the right actions.

You're going to be putting other people before yourself. You're not going to be all about me and just all of it. You're just going to, it's going to show up in your actions. If you're truly a Christian, you have true faith.

It's going to show by, you know, the fruit that you produce. Okay. Good. Mike. The difference between pseudo-faith and true faith.

I think a big point is the basis of your faith. True faith is based upon the foundation of God's word. Sugo-faith is whatever I hope it might be. And we have something solid to stand on when we have God's word. And so therein lies our true faith.

[46 : 19] Amen. Good. Good. Very good. Any other comments? good answers. I think we all know it.

It's that, you know, it's actually doing it, which leads to the next question. Why is it so hard to have true faith as Tozer describes? Why is it so hard?

Okay. Danny? Danny? Thank you. Because we have to admit we have no control. It's all God. So I think that's why.

Yeah. And pseudo-faith, back to that a little bit, is still acting as if we have some sort of control over it. Good. Yeah.

Pseudo-faith is still having kind of your hand on it. Even if it's just a little bit, still having your hand on it because, you know, you're not completely trusting that God knows what He's doing. And so it's holding on a little bit and not completely letting go and trusting in God completely.

[47 : 26] Paul? And it really comes down when I was thinking about it to the dying to self because we we have to admit to ourselves that we have a pretty high opinion of our own opinion and that we think we know what's best.

We can look at especially other people's situations and tell them what's best. Yeah. And our ways are not God's ways. Rather, the other way around, God's ways are not our ways.

And it's a recognition of the fact that we cannot depend solely upon ourselves to find that answer and to find what's true, what's right, what's appropriate in a given situation.

Good. Good responses. Dan? Well, let me read a couple of these sentences from A.W. Tozer and then respond.

For true faith, it is either God or total collapse. That's kind of a tough thought there. Yeah. I mean, nobody wants to totally collapse.

[48 : 35] So, that's pretty difficult to think about. And then this one, and not since Adam first stood up on the earth is God failed a single man or woman or church who trusted in him.

Kind of goes back to the idea of control. Yeah. And, I mean, that's a great thought. I think it really holds up. Especially when I think of stories I hear, you know, whether it's from Voice of the Martyrs or from just other places in church history, the Bible, even stories that I know of pastors and church leaders and even just church people and church members that have faced some very difficult tests and the Lord has really worked things through and whatever may have come that they trusted in him.

And so, I think, yes, that's very true and it's good to remember that and understand that reality. But still, going back to that idea, it's either God or total collapse.

Yeah. There's your choices. I mean, it's not really, if it's true faith, your choice would be true faith and that's pretty much, you give it to God. I mean, if God's going to take your life, well, that's God's will.

Yeah. That's God's choice. Yeah. Good. You give him the choice of God. Yeah. Because too often in those moments, I think, we dwell upon the total collapse possibility more so than on the possibility that God's actually going to, you know, show up for whatever that situation that we're, yeah, because it's difficult to be in that position.

[50 : 11] Let's not pretend like it isn't. And the classic example of this from Scripture, I think, is Peter walking on the water. Isn't it? That, I think, we give Peter a lot of hard, a really hard time in that story, you know, but imagine again if it was you.

Because there was other disciples in the boat. It wasn't just Peter. Peter said, hey, you know, Lord, if that's you, command me to walk out on the water. And so, you know, obviously Jesus tells him to

come.

So you've got to think initially, there were other guys in the boat, but only Peter had the courage, the faith enough to say something. And to step out.

And he did well. He did well as long as he kept his eyes on Christ, but then, you know, the waves kicked up and the winds picked up and he took his focus off the Lord and he sank.

You know, that's an example of it's either, it's faith or total collapse. You know, he sunk. And the good thing for us too, I think, with that story as well is, you know, when he stopped having faith and he sunk, that Jesus didn't hold his head under water, you know, and say, I told you, you know, you had faith, but you didn't, so now I'm going to kill you or something like that, you know, that Jesus reached in and pulled him out.

[51 : 33] So there's encouragement that as we sometimes lack faith that the Lord will be gracious to us, but there's certainly, I think as we read the Bible, there certainly is a strong encouragement from the Lord for us to trust him in all things, no matter what, to trust him.

Even when we go through really difficult times, times of suffering, we endure tragedy, we're still called upon by him to trust him, to trust in his will, to trust in his sovereign grace, to trust in his sovereign plan, and so over and over again, we see that reminder from Scripture, from God to us, to trust him.

Last question, why are we so easily paralyzed by the fear of human approval? We've got a couple minutes. Why are we so easily paralyzed by the fear of human approval?

Because we're human? Well, I think we see it even with our little ones, and it still is a problem for us as we get older, is that it's difficult to be the one who you feel like you're singled out.

Especially as, again, we talked about this morning, where as Christians, we're called to be strange, and yet it's difficult to be in those situations where, especially when, you know, when we're amongst other believers, it's easy to talk about the things of the Lord, to talk about the Bible and Scripture, but when we're in a situation where we're not with other believers, it's harder for us to be as willing to talk about those things because we fear being isolated from the group.

[53 : 15] Cameron? I think that can go right back to what we talked about this morning with our holy huddles. Why do you get in that holy huddle? Well, those people approve of you. They already know you.

You're safe. When you step out, yeah. Yeah. So when you step out, that's when it gets scary, but I think it went right back to this warning.

You've got to be willing to step out. Yeah. Absolutely. Good. Good comment to end on. Okay. Let's pray. Lord God, I thank you again for this time that we've had and for the discussion that we've had as part of this lesson that we've gone over.

Lord, we want to have a culture that displays the gospel. And so, Lord, we pray that we would be a church that not only has it down right on paper, but is doing it right in practice.

Knowing, God, again, that we are fallen, we are sinners. Lord, we've been saved by grace, but we still struggle at times with the desire to put ourselves in your position, to think that we are more important maybe than we are, to feel like our opinions matter more than others.

[54 : 37] And Lord, oftentimes when we do that, we don't go about handling those things in an appropriate way. And Lord, as we've talked about, then the church does not become a place that reflects the good news of Jesus Christ, but it reflects more of like a war zone.

And so, Lord, we pray that as a people that you would help us to be willing to unself ourselves every day, to deny ourselves, to pursue Christ-likeness, that as a result of that, Lord, we pray that the culture that is created here would be such where we flourish, we grow like Christ, we help each other grow like Christ, and Lord, we reach out to our community and they see that there is something strange about these people and that they would be attracted to that, knowing that we're not like the world, that we're not like anything else that they see, and Lord, that they would see that the difference, all the difference, has been made by your Son, Jesus Christ.

And so, Father, we pray that you would help us as we go about our week, just open our eyes to those whom you've placed around us to pay more attention to their needs, Lord, and to seek to be used by you to reach out to them with the intention, Lord, we pray, of sharing the good news of Christ with them.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.