

WE RECONCILE PEOPLE WITH GOD AND ALL CREATION

There was a Catholic Priest, a Baptist Minister and a Rabbi at Skukuza in the Kruger. They were having a conversation about their different perspectives... Salvation, Christ and so on... After hours of this, they decided that the argument needed to be settled one way or another.

They were in the bush and Kruger is full of lions. Who could get a lion saved the quickest?

The Catholic priest said, I will show you how powerful the catholic faith is and I will get a lion saved in 10 minutes... Off he goes. He returns scratched, bitten, beaten and bleeding but triumphantly announces that he got the lion saved and gave it holy communion.

The Baptist minister and Rabbi are impressed. The Baptist minister says, well I can do better. I will get a lion saved in 5 minutes. Off he goes. He returns, scratched, bitten, beaten, bleeding with a broken arm but triumphantly announces that the lion got saved and baptized in the river.

The catholic priest and Rabbi are impressed. The Rabbi says he can do better. I will get the lion saved in 2 minutes he boasts. Off he goes. He returns, in a wheelchair, scratched, bitten, beaten, and bleeding with a broken arm and two broken legs. The catholic priest and Rabbi are deeply concerned and ask him what happened... "Well," he answered, "In retrospect, I shouldn't have started with circumcision!"

Questions! We go through life with so many of them... When we are growing up as children we ask all sorts of questions... When we are adults we still have questions but they may just differ from when we were kids... What about earthquakes and tsunamis? What about the school shootings... What about the crime and corruption in South Africa? So much suffering, pain and loss... There is so much pain and hurt in the world and I'm sure we all have questions for the Lord... If we as Christians do, how much more the rest of the world who don't know Jesus... We can become cynical.

WHAT IS CYNICISM?

- An attitude of scornful or jaded negativity, especially a general distrust of the integrity or professed motives of others: the public cynicism aroused by governmental scandals.
- A person who believes motives are bad or selfish
- Inclined to believe the worst, especially about people
- Words that mean the same...Synonyms - doubt; bitterness; pessimism; sarcasm; distrust;

We live in a very cynical (doubting; bitter; pessimistic; sarcastic; distrusting) society... And we can just go onto social media, listen to the TV, Newspapers and 702 and really get wound up... OR we can deliberately surround ourselves with the good! Remember Jesus never said come to me and things will always go the way you want them to... There is no denying (whether we want to hear about it or not) that our world is full of problems. Turn on the TV or look around our community – the effects of greed, selfishness and broken relationships are everywhere.

In our cynical society, people struggle to find faith and believe. They say that the Big Bang and evolution and all sorts of stuff is the reason we are here... My question is if we evolved from apes, why are there still apes?

The thought that all the beauty of creation evolved from a piece of snot floating in space and a big bang, eish! I think it takes more faith to be an atheist! Have you ever heard, 'Give enough monkeys typewriters and you'll end up with Shakespeare. It comes from **Anthony Flew – a philosopher.**

He used to be the poster boy for atheists, used to debate against Christianity, saying that if you give enough time & research any miracle is explainable. Believe it or not, they did a research degree, where they put a computer in with monkeys, and they didn't produce a single word! The chance of getting a one-letter word with a space on either side is 1 in 30,000. The chances of getting 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day' would be 1 divided by 10 to the power of 690. If you took every particle in the known universe and added them all up, you'd only have 1 divided by 10 to the power of 80. The idea that language makes sense and can get beauty from it without intelligence behind it is just plain nonsense. Without God in the universe, there is no hope for any meaning, none of it makes sense without God.

Misanthropy = the opposite of philanthropy... The more TV you watch, the more cynical you become. If you withdraw from TV, the symptoms are the same as if you take people off drugs.

In 1977 \$500 was offered for 5 couples to give up TV for a month. \$500 in 1977 is equivalent in purchasing power to **about \$2,592.20. That is R49 251.80 in today's terms in SA.** They had to ask hundreds of couples before they could get their 5... Their consumption of alcohol went off the charts... One woman said, 'It's terrible; I had to talk to my husband.'

A friend of Prof Michael Ramsdon from Oxford University experimented in Australia... He stood on the street and had 6, \$50 bills and he tried to give them away... No one would take them... People even crossed the street to avoid him...

In a cynical culture, we disbelieve everything, even the good. In light of this, what should our response be? People need to be challenged in their unbelief. Many people try valiantly to make our world a better place. Thank goodness they do. But often, it's like trying to put an Elastoplast on an open wound. There's something deeper that we need to address.

The heart of the problem, it is said, is the problem of the human heart. And until we recognize this, we can never become part of the solution.

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

In this verse, we are taught to keep our spiritual "heart." Heart, therefore, means the command centre of the soul; the mind, will, and affections

Jesus said in **John 14:1**, "Let not your heart be troubled."

This means we don't need to worry or freak out! The word heart can also refer to the intellect.

Proverbs 23:7 says, "As he thinks in his heart, so is he."

The Hebrew verb SHAAR is found here only, and means, "as he is all along in his heart, so is he is in action."

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Talking about the thoughts and intents of the heart. If we truly want to deal with the human heart we must bring Jesus into it. But how do we bring Jesus into it? Being the people of the kingdom is way more than getting people saved. Way more than, "Here say this prayer and here is your ticket to heaven and eternal life"

As people of the kingdom in a grace-based community will be there to share Christ with people, heal broken humanity and involve ourselves in areas of concern in all creation, wherever the Lord may lead; The Holy Spirit indwells us and goes before us and we engage with biblical values in whatever area they are needed.

In the ancient world names conveyed meaning. Jesus is the English translation of the ancient Aramaic word 'Yeshua', which means "God saves". A more contemporary paraphrase would be "God-to-the-rescue!"

Helmut Thielicke - The gospel must be preached afresh and told in new ways to every generation, since every generation has its own unique questions. The gospel must constantly be forwarded to a new address, because the recipient is repeatedly changing his place of residence

This is no self-help, pick-and-mix spiritual solution designed simply to increase your sense of well-being. Both grace and healing that Jesus brings amount to a contemporary way of expressing the fullness of the Gospel.

Healing, as *SOTERIA* means:

- **SALVATION, Rom 1:16** I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.
- **WHOLENESS, John 10:10** The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows). AMP
- **DELIVERANCE, Psalm 34:17** Is anyone crying for help? GOD is listening, ready to rescue you. MSG
- **RESTORATION, 1Pe 5:10** And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ESV

The total result of the work of Christ. Salvation, wholeness, deliverance, and restoration, summed up in Jesus' words...

Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor (Salvation). He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind (Restoration), to release the oppressed (Deliverance), (19) to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Wholeness)."

John Wimber, in speaking of healing, mentions:

- Mental health,
- Spiritual health,
- Social health,
- Emotional health

All as part of the healing Christ brings. It is that "*wholeness that begins with relationship with Jesus and then follows as He works to complete perfection in us*"

Going out to preach and heal was a central part of the commission of Jesus. Essential to being a healing body is understanding the Biblical emphasis on the poor and oppressed. These are those who are the object of God's grace.

John Wimber said, "If you are not involved with the poor as a Church, do not put the name Vineyard on the door!"

The ministry of reconciling man to God brings healing which includes 3 things:

1. The power ministry through signs and wonders
2. The inner healing of psychological damage as well as physical healing (We pray for the sick)
3. The empowerment of oppressed communities.

Jesus, in other words, evangelism to the unchurched must be the centre of all we do; otherwise, we will end up with a merely social program or a great NGO.

We develop relationships with people, and as we begin to have relational equity with them, we can bring Jesus into the conversation. We must keep the edge of confronting people with eternal issues.

Our lives should be lived in a way that people can sense our compassion for them in a total sense... So, they are not a notch on my belt, a testimony on a Sunday morning or some sort of project... We want to be people of compassion and build a community of compassion. This means we must depend completely on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It should be a priority to create continual opportunities, in meetings and day-to-day life, where we minister to each other and people outside the church through the prophetic gifts, the laying on of hands, and creating situations where we wait for the Holy Spirit to work.

We want to reconcile people with God and creation. That means we must also engage with the needs of the poor in our communities, serving people who are both physically and spiritually poor. The reality is that the gospel also compels us not just to work with the result of poverty, but to engage with society and work with the root causes of poverty. Social justice and more... So how do we do this? How do we reconcile people with God and all creation?

FALL IN LOVE WITH JESUS! When you love someone you can't stop thinking about them, talking about them... If you hang out with me for any length of time, I will talk about Mandy, our kids, family, the Springboks, and Jesus...

Why is it if I get the least bit excited about Jesus, I am called a fanatic, but I can be hysterically excited about sports, cars, people and so much more and I am just called a fan...

PERSONAL FRIENDSHIPS remain the most effective practice... I would encourage you to live a non-religious, relevant lifestyle.

We also STEP OUT AND ENGAGE in grassroots involvement with situations of need, be they inner city street people, informal settlement communities or any other context of human displacement, where we meet the reality of the poor.

How do we live this life of Kingdom People?

Need a mentor

Show up

Don't try to be clever, be yourself

Don't care who gets the credit
Be flexible in non-essentials
Your mess will be your message
Know you're anointed
Know your gifting
Grow in holiness
Every starfish
Love
Feast on Word
When in doubt worship
Live in reality

And as you do, as the ancient Latin blessing for a journey states 'DEUS VOBISCUM' –
May God go with you