

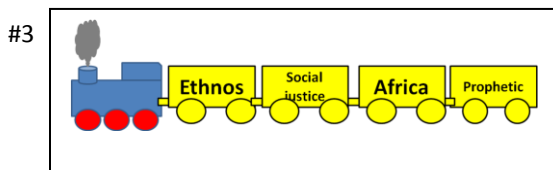
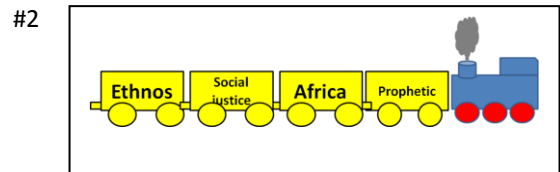
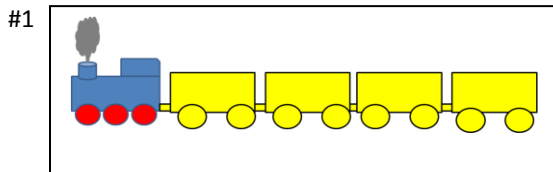
Sunday 23rd January - ORACLE Notes

WCF – Word for the Year

A. Introduction

- In Rev 2/3 we read the messages which the apostle John relayed to the 7 churches, in which there is both commendation for what they have done well, and confrontation where they are deficient.
- If such a message was to be relayed to WCF, what would our strengths and weaknesses be?
 - Perhaps the commendation would be: diligence; remaining true; raising up disciples; sending out, planting and releasing people; rich in giftings and the use thereof; willingness to appear like fools; generosity; blessing of others; sacrifice; standing up for the voiceless and against the arrogant and unjust.
 - Perhaps the confrontation would be: putting second things first; weak at evangelism; thousands of people have passed through WCF over the decades who have been impacted, but the church has never reached its full capacity.

Consider a train with carriages: the train represents the gospel message of salvation by grace through the work of Jesus on the cross - instead of the engine pulling the carriages (1), perhaps at times we have placed the carriages in front of the engine (2). Instead, we need to keep first things first, and maintain the gospel of salvation as primary (prime = number 1)



- The gospel of salvation needs to remain the driving force, enthusiasm, excitement and engine room of everything that we do (#3).

B. The only antidote to the primary issue

- Romans 3:23... “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
- The gospel deals with the primary issue of humankind → SIN!
- Whether a person is Rwandan, Russian, American, Italian, Xhosa, Mexican, or South African; rich or poor, educated or uneducated, a politician or not a politician
 - We are ALL riddled with sin
 - We have all inherited the corrupted DNA which has been passed down from our great-great-great-grandparents Adam & Eve.
- This sinful condition is the root for all hatred, envy, bitterness, lusts, sexual perversions, bad habits, racism, xenophobia, elitism, inferiority, sexism, abuse, corruption, deceit, lies etc etc.

C. The greatest divide in the universe

- The greatest divide in the universe is between humans and God, and it has been caused by sin.
- No amount of engineering can bridge the divide; no scientific discovery; no human philosophy; no amount of good works; no self-actualization will ever be able to span this divide.
- The tower of Babel (Gen 11) was the very best effort of humans to get back to God, but it was thwarted as God had another plan – the gospel plan.
- The only two places in all of human existence where sin is dealt with are hell and calvary.
 - Acts 4:12... “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.”
 - Heb 9:27... “Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment”

D. The root of “gospel”

- According to Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones, the root of the Greek word used for gospel (euagellion) comes from Greek literature :
 - If a village was under attack, the army would go out to war, leaving the women and children at home.
 - From time to time a herald would come back from the battle front with news of what was happening in the fight.

- When the herald/messenger came back and said that victory had been achieved, the enemy was defeated, they were safe and could return to the freedom of their daily lives, this was considered **good news**.
- Consider the above in the light of: John 16:11; 19:30; Col 2:15; I Peter 3:22

E. What the gospel achieves...

The gospel bring about...

• **Salvation:**

- The gospel changes people through the re-birth – forgiveness of sin; release from guilt; a recreated spirit; the heart of stone being replaced with a heart of stone; the potential to take off the old-self and to put on the new-self etc etc
- Salvation through believing in the work of the cross, repentance and rebirth is the entrance into the kingdom (Jn 3:3) and into the church.

• **Connects:**

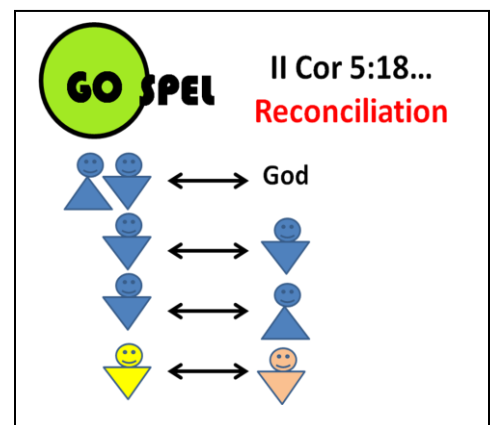
- The gospel connects people into a spiritual body called the church, which is the Body of Christ in the earth.

• **Reconciles:**

- The gospel reconciles (II Cor 5:18ff):
 - People with God; enemies; genders; young & old; race groups etc etc

• **Permeates:**

- The gospel brings positive godly influence into every sphere of society
 - Matt 13:31-33
 - Mustard seed – expansion
 - Leaven – penetration and influence



F. The gospel is founded on **grace**...

- The gospel is referred to as the “gospel of the grace of God” – see Acts 20:24
 - We all start from the same place – unworthy sinners (Rom 3:23 – “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”)
 - Filthy rags – even our very best efforts are like filthy rags in the sight of God (Is 64:6)
 - David Dickson – I make two piles (1) my very worst mistakes and sins; (2) my very best efforts and achievements; and then I walk away from both piles towards Jesus.



G. Green light → **“GO”**

- “Advance!” - the consistent “apostolic” mandate of the Bible from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, reinforced at various intervals – e.g. Matt 28; Acts 13
- Once we have tasted and experienced the transforming power of the gospel in our own lives, there comes an inner compulsion (irresistible impulse) to go, to spread and to obey.
- The full implications of the gospel includes the responsibility to obey – this is not an optional extra from the “hard-core”.
 - This includes the ministry of reconciliation (II Cor 5:18)
 - This includes going to be people who are different to ourselves –being reconciled and making disciples (Matt 28; Acts 1:8; II Cor 5:18; Gal 2:11ff; Eph 2:14ff)
 - We need to live, experience and exhibit a counter-culture i.e. a culture that is not the same as the rest of society, where racial divisions are age-old, insidious and ominous.

H. Mark 4:26-28

He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground.²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

- A few thoughts on the above scripture:
 - We have a responsibility to scatter seeds – no farmer expects to harvest a crop if he does not first sow seeds;

- The work of the gospel towards salvation is ultimately a work of the Holy Spirit – once we have sowed, we need to continue to believe in the work that the Spirit is doing in the lives of people, even if it takes time;
- The work of the gospel is progressive, but not always instantaneous. The is gradual but persistent growth and development over time.
- We must not be surprised when a mature crop comes to the fore, and the harvest is ready.
- **Exponential increase...**
 - If 22,000 Billy Graham type evangelists led 100 people per week to Christ each, it would take approximately 40 years to reach the world;
 - However, if 12 people tell 12 people about Christ, and those 144 people in turn tell 144 people in the next year; and then 20,736 new converts tell 20,736 people about Christ etc etc. It would take 4 years to reach the world's entire population.
 - The best evangelist is **YOU** (II Tim 4:5) – if you know enough to be born-again, then you know enough to lead someone else to Christ.
 - Who are you going to lead to Christ this year?
 - It may be the result of a seed that you sowed a long time ago, or someone new. Go and check whether a shoot has developed, or perhaps a mature head ready to be harvested.
 - Seed that has fallen on good soil can produce a return 30, 60 and 100 fold (Matt 13:8).